



## Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the SHOUHARDO III Program

A USAID-funded Title II Development Food Security Activity implemented by CARE  
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## Summary Report (MTE Report, Volume I)

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Hopefully we've listened well, our observations are grounded in reality, our assessment is accurate, and our recommendations will be useful.

Sincerely,

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MTE REPORT, VOLUME II, Contains the Initial Scope of Work for the SHOUHARDO III MTE, the MTE Protocol and Persons Interviewed and Sites Visited for Data Collection

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## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
BBSS	Beneficiary-Based Survey System
C&F	Cargo & Freight
C<5	Child Under Five Years of Age
CAV	Community Agriculture Volunteer
CC	Community Clinic
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CG	Community Groups
CEV	Community Empowerment Volunteer
CFW	Cash for Work
CHV	Community Health Volunteer
CLTS	Community-Led Total Sanitation
COG	Core Occupational Group
CoP	Chief of Party
CSG	Community Support Group
DCRM	Disaster and Climate Risk Management
DPHE	Department of Public Health Engineering
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EKATA	Empowerment Knowledge and Transformative Action
EPI	Extended Program of Immunization
FFBS	Farmer Field and Business School
FFP	Food for Peace
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GMP	Growth Monitoring and Promotion
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HCA	Host Country Agreement
HHN	Health, Hygiene and Nutrition
IGA	Income-Generating Activity
IMCI	Integrated Management of Childhood Illness
ITSH	Inland Transport Storage and Handling
KMAL	Knowledge Management, Advocacy and Learning
LEB	Locally Elected Body
LGED	Local Government Engineering Department
LoA	Life of Activity or Life of Award
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MT	Metric Ton
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
MUAC	Middle Upper Arm Circumference
NBD	Nation Building Department
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PACC	Program Advisory and Coordinating Committees
PEP	Poor and Extreme Poor
PIIF	Program Integration Implementation Framework
PLW	Pregnant and Lactating Women
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition

SBTB	School-Based Teen Brigade
SHOUHARDO	Strengthening Household Ability to Respond to Development Opportunities
TANGO	Technical Assistance to NGOs
TM	Technical Manager
TO	Technical Officer
ToC	Theory of Change
UDMC	Union Disaster Management Committee
UDV	Union Disaster Volunteers
UP	Union Parishad
UzDMC	Upazila Disaster Management Committee
VDC	Village Development Committee
VSLA	Village Savings and Lending Association
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

## SHOUHARDO III Mid-Term Evaluation SUMMARY REPORT

### I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CARE commissioned a Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the SHOUHARDO III Program to formulate recommendations for the remaining life of the program to increase effectiveness in achieving sustainable impact and increase efficiency in use of resources. The MTE was planned and implemented over the period from late October 2017, through mid-June, 2018, with information gathering and preliminary analysis undertaken in Bangladesh from February 12 through March 12.

The SHOUHARDO III Program is being implemented in 947 villages in 115 unions in 23 upazilas in 8 districts<sup>1</sup> in northern Bangladesh. The goal of the program is to achieve improved gender equitable food and nutrition security and resilience for vulnerable people living in the flood-prone Char and Haor Regions of Bangladesh by 2020. The program is specifically targeting people defined by their communities as poor or extreme poor (PEP), expecting to have lasting impact by the end of its life on around 675,000 persons<sup>2</sup>. The overall program value is USD 80 million<sup>3</sup> from the United States Government with a complementary funding of USD 7,707,490 million from the Government of Bangladesh (GoB). A total of 126,810 Metric Tons (MTs) of commodities are planned for monetization over the life of the program, and 11,540 MT of commodities are planned for distribution under the maternal and child health and nutrition component (Purpose 2) of the program.

Despite a significant delay in the signing of the Host Country Agreement (HCA) with the GoB that governed monetization arrangements, the MTE found that the program has established a solid foundation upon which to build in the remaining two plus years and significant behavioral changes are already occurring. Some of the Farmer Field and Business School (FFBS) groups, for example, are already independently procuring bulk inputs and collectively marketing production through the coordination of the group's farmer leader, and many of the Comprehensive Homestead Development and On-Farm Income-Generating Activity FFBS groups have invested their cash transfer input support in goats which provide a form of savings that can be used to recover from shocks, effectively building household resilience. Household behavior changes are already occurring, such as the sharing of household chores, giving pregnant and lactating women more food and rest, and changes in child feeding practices. In support of building community resilience, Village Development Committees (VDCs) are becoming actively involved in organizing community responses to floods, organizing distribution of materials, and ensuring that vulnerable individuals (women, elderly) were provided with adequate shelter. Various sources reported that the communities that have program-supported VDCs are better able to get access to support in times of emergencies and are more prepared for responding. Women, across the program, are showing increased confidence, decision-making power, mobility, and expanded opportunities for community participation from the combination of the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality messages with increasing income generated by women. Community groups such as the VDCs supported by youth groups are beginning to advocate for greater engagement between communities and local government for basic services.

The MTE identified four major themes for SHOUHARDO III as a priority focus in its remaining life and has formulated sixteen high priority recommendations in support of these themes. One of these themes is to focus on **ensuring program quality**. Under this theme, the MTE has proposed nine recommendations including developing and implementing a livelihoods strategy for the deep haor context, shifting technical capacities closer to the front-lines, shifting technical capacities under Purpose

<sup>1</sup> Kurigram and Gaibandha in the Northern Chars Region, Jamalpur and Sirajganj in the Middle Chars Region and Netrakona, Kishoreganj, Sunamganj and Habiganj in the Haor Region.

<sup>2</sup> This number includes a target of 168,521 households having 384,000 direct recipients (2.28 persons/household).

<sup>3</sup> Includes cash resources as well as the C&F value of monetized and distributed food from FFP

I toward off-farm income-generating activities (IGAs), youth employment and Villages Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) interventions, reducing volunteer workload at the front-lines, changing the format of Quarterly Learning and Sharing Meetings, revising the VSLA strategy, then expanding VSLAs to groups with members who are generating regular cash flow, improving the quality of Growth Monitoring and Promotion (GMP) services and identifying appropriate sanitation technology, especially in the Haor Region.

The second theme is to focus on **achieving sustainable impact**. There is only one recommendation under this theme, but its importance cannot be over-emphasized, since SHOUHARDO III will not be considered a successful program if the impact that is generated is not sustained beyond the program's life. The recommendation is to implement a process to develop and implement a sustainability strategy for the program. The strategy should be built on a clear vision for how key groups under each of the program's purposes are supposed to function after the program ends. Once this vision has been developed, the program should identify and address the obstacles to sustaining impact related to the resources, capacities, motivation and linkages required to sustain these groups.

The third theme is to expand the **focus on adolescents and youth**. Adolescents and youth are the future of Bangladesh. They are also generally enthusiastic, willing to learn, and influential, not only with peers, but also with family members. Without guidance and capacity building, they could become the future's poor. But with guidance and support, they will be the future's leaders. The MTE has identified three specific recommendations in support of this theme. The first is to give more attention and resources to the youth employment interventions under Purpose I, including putting in place dedicated staff for youth employment. The second recommendation is to capitalize on opportunities for engaging adolescent girls and boys in a broader range of program activities, and the third recommendation is to target young, newly-wed households for participation to fill gaps in participant numbers.

Even the most well-designed program can fail if **implementation systems**<sup>4</sup> are not made as efficient and effective as possible. While for the most part, the implementation systems in the SHOUHARDO III Program are functioning effectively, there are a few changes that need to be made to improve efficiency of program delivery, and the MTE identified three specific recommendations. These are to address the major staff structure constraints affecting implementation, implement a strategic refresher training process for front-line staff, and pilot alternative food distribution mechanisms in the more readily accessible areas on attached chars and the marginal haor where market structures are functional.

The MTE also identified a number of areas that go beyond the scope of the SHOUHARDO III Program but are important to be brought to the attention of Food for Peace (FFP) since they affect the ability of the program to maximize impact with efficient use of resources. These areas include thoughts about the efficiency of distributed food for achieving impact on preventing child malnutrition, the challenges faced by the program's monitoring and evaluation systems, and the need to invest more in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) interventions in the types of contexts in which SHOUHARDO III is working.

The SHOUHARDO III Program is already doing some very nice work in starting to achieve sustainable impact. The program has strong potential to be recognized as a "great" program if it can make adjustments as recommended by the MTE.

## II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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<sup>4</sup> Implementation systems include the management systems used for planning, problem-solving & decision-making; partner roles, responsibilities and relationships; the systems for using internal and external learning to inform program implementation; the mechanisms for ensuring integration across program components and complementarity with other development programs; and the resource management systems for money, commodities, staff and material support.

## A. Overview of SHOUHARDO III

The goal of the SHOUHARDO III Program is to achieve improved gender equitable food and nutrition security and resilience for the vulnerable people living in the flood-prone Char and Haor Regions of Bangladesh by 2020. Under the leadership and technical guidance of CARE, the SHOUHARDO III Program is being implemented by six Partner Non-Governmental Organizations (PNGOs) in 947 villages in 115 unions in 23 upazilas in 8 districts<sup>5</sup> in northern Bangladesh. A map of the program area is provided in Annex D. CARE is responsible for overall programmatic and financial oversight and also manages the commodity pipeline, program-level collaborative learning and action systems, and technical support for the six implementing PNGOs. These partners include the SKS Foundation implementing in Gaibandha District (22.6% of the household beneficiary target), Mahideb Juba Somaj Kallayan Somity (MJSKS) implementing in Kurigram District (19.8% of the targeted households), the National Development Programme (NDP) implementing in Sirajganj District (19.0% of targeted households), People's Oriented Program Implementation (POPI) operating in the two districts of Kishoreganj and Netrakona (16.7% of the household target), Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) implementing in Habigonj and Sunamganj Districts (11.3% of the household target), and Eco-Social Development Organization (ESDO) implementing in Jamalpur District (10.5% of the household target). The SHOUHARDO III Program also has formal technical relationships with the WorldFish Center in Bangladesh for fisheries interventions, the GoB's Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) for construction-related interventions, and the GoB's Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) for water quality interventions. Table I shows the current Goal, Purposes and Sub-Purposes for the program.

**Table I: Goal, Purposes and Sub-Purposes for the SHOUHARDO III Program**

<b>GOAL:</b> Improved gender equitable food and nutrition security and resilience for the vulnerable people living in the Char and Haor Regions in Bangladesh by 2020			
<b>Purpose 1:</b> Increased equitable access to income for both women and men, and nutritious food for men, women, boys and girls			
<b>Sub-Purpose 1.1:</b> Increased agricultural production of PEP	<b>Sub-Purpose 1.2:</b> Increased access to agricultural markets for PEP	<b>Sub-Purpose 1.3:</b> Increased off-farm income for PEP	<b>Sub-Purpose 1.4:</b> Increased utilization of financial services by PEP
<b>Purpose 2:</b> Improved nutritional status of children under five years of age (C<5), pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and adolescent girls			
<b>Sub-Purpose 2.1:</b> Increased utilization of nutritious food for PLW, C<5 and adolescent girls	<b>Sub-Purpose 2.2:</b> Improved access to health and nutrition services	<b>Sub-Purpose 2.3:</b> Reduced prevalence of water-borne diseases	
<b>Purpose 3:</b> Strengthened gender equitable ability of people, households, communities, and systems to mitigate, adapt to and recover from man-made and natural shocks			
<b>Sub-Purpose 3.1:</b> Increased preparedness of PEP households and communities to mitigate and respond to shocks		<b>Sub-Purpose 3.2:</b> Local government institutions' (Union Parishad) capacity and implementation of Disaster and Climate Risk Management (DCRM) activities increased	
<b>Purpose 4:</b> Increased women's empowerment and gender equity at family and community level			
<b>Sub-Purpose 4.1:</b> Improved environment for women's empowerment		<b>Sub-Purpose 4.2:</b> Strengthened agency of women	
<b>Purpose 5:</b> Provision and utilization of public services (Local Elected Bodies and Nation-Building Departments) for communities especially for poor and extreme poor increased			
<b>Sub-Purpose 5.1:</b> Communities (especially PEP) are better able to demand and negotiate increased public services (from Union Parishads and Nation-Building Departments) services		<b>Sub-Purpose 5.2:</b> Accountability of Locally Elected Bodies and Nation-Building Departments to the needs of communities, especially to PEP increased	

<sup>5</sup> Kurigram and Gaibandha in the Northern Chars Region, Jamalpur and Sirajganj in the Middle Chars Region and Netrakona, Kishoreganj, Sunamganj and Habigonj in the Haor Region.

1. Purpose 1: Income & Food Production. Under this component, the SHOUHARDO III Program plans to reach approximately 168,500 women, men and youth from PEP households with interventions intended to increase crop diversity and homestead production of nutritious food, increase access to agricultural markets, increase opportunities for generating off-farm income, increase savings and access to capital, and improve the enabling environment for on-farm and off-farm income generation and asset protection. In the program's major operational planning document, the Program Integration Implementation Framework (PIIF), there are six major interventions being undertaken under Purpose 1. These are (1) implementation of FFBSs, (2) promotion of VSLA groups in program villages, (3) facilitation of participation for PEP households in market value chains, (4) promotion of diversified income for PEP households, (5) facilitation of vocation skills training and employment for youth, and (6) cash-for-work.

2. Purpose 2: Health, Hygiene & Nutrition. Under this component, the SHOUHARDO III Program intends to reach around 57,000 children under two years of age, 76,000 pregnant and lactating women, and 45,000 other family members with interventions designed to increase access to nutritious food, improve household health, hygiene and nutrition behavior, improve access to health and nutrition services and improve WASH infrastructure and services. The PIIF describes five major interventions being undertaken under Purpose 2. These are (1) promotion of adoption of standard health, hygiene and nutrition (HHN) practices at the household level, (2) provision of supplementary food rations for PEP households with pregnant or lactating women, (3) developing linkages between communities and health service organizations or providers, (4) providing support to communities for constructing or installing WASH structures, and (5) advocating with the GoB to improve WASH support and services.

3. Purpose 3: Disaster and Climate Risk Management. The SHOUHARDO III Program will target 135,000 PEP community members to benefit directly from disaster preparedness, risk mitigation and risk reduction activities through interventions to improve climate-resilient livelihoods for PEP households, improve disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies for households, communities and local government, increase DRR and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) capacities of civil society and government institutions, and increase advocacy and mobilization capacities of PEP households and communities for DRR/CCA. The PIIF describes six major interventions being undertaken under Purpose 3. These are (1) capacity building of Union Disaster Volunteers (UDVs), households, communities and other groups on DRR and CCA, (2) establishing a system for dissemination of early warning and weather information at the community level, (3) construction of women-friendly disaster resilient infrastructure, (4) promotion of climate smart technologies, (5) capacity building of Union Disaster Management Committees (UDMCs) and Upazila Disaster Management Committees (UzDMCs), and (6) coordinating with the GoB and other actors on emergency response and recovery.

4. Purpose 4: Women's Empowerment & Gender Equality. Using the Empowerment, Knowledge and Transformative Action (EKATA) model, the SHOUHARDO III Program will target 33,000 women and adolescent girls with interventions designed to increase the agency of women and adolescent girls and strengthen the enabling environment for women's empowerment. The PIIF describes six major interventions being undertaken under Purpose 4. These are (1) facilitation of the EKATA model, (2) facilitation of couples' dialogues, (3) provision of life skills and labor skills to women and youth, (4) engaging men and boys for promoting gender equality, (5) addressing gender-based violence, and (6) mobilizing local decision-makers on women's empowerment and gender-based violence.

5. Purpose 5: Public Services for PEP. The SHOUHARDO III Program expects that all residents in the 947 villages targeted by the program will benefit directly or indirectly from interventions to improve service provision by local elected bodies and nation building departments. The PIIF describes six major interventions being undertaken under Purpose 5. These are (1) mobilizing communities through VDCs, (2) mobilizing youth groups for community awareness raising, (3) providing support to Union Parishads for addressing the needs of PEP households, (4) providing support to nation-building departments for

addressing the needs of PEP households, and (5) facilitating activities for Program Advisory and Coordination Committees (PACCs).

**6. Cross-Cutting Themes.** The SHOUHARDO III Program has four major cross-cutting themes, including promoting gender equity and gender equality, targeting youth, promoting the practice of good governance, and addressing sources of environmental risk.

## **B. Contextual Factors Affecting Program Implementation or Impact**

The major contextual factor affecting the implementing of the SHOUHARDO III Program was the difficulty at the beginning of the program finalizing the HCA with the GoB. CARE has operated Title II programs in Bangladesh since 1974 and has never had difficulty with negotiating an HCA. The GoB for SHOUHARDO III, however, took much longer than normal to review and approve the HCA. The agreement governs both the GoB contribution to the program as well as the terms for the purchase of monetized wheat by the GoB. As a result of the delay, the first payment for monetized wheat was not made until September, 2016, almost a year after the program start date. CARE was able to use carry-over monetization funds from SHOUHARDO II to start-up the program, and some partners also used their own funds to support start-up. The funds available, however, were not sufficient to take the program to the scale planned for the first year of the program, and the program fell behind on implementation. At the time of the MTE, the program had made up most of the lost ground on implementation but was still underspending on its Life of Activity (LoA) budget.

## **C. MTE Methodology**

**1. Purpose of the MTE.** The SHOUHARDO III MTE was a formative evaluation intended to review the progress of the program in producing planned outputs, to assess the intended and unintended effects of these outputs, and to examine the quality of various processes being used to implement the program **to formulate recommendations to be implemented in the remaining life of the program.** These recommendations are oriented around (a) scaling up effective interventions, (b) modifying interventions to improve effectiveness, (c) suspending interventions that are not effective enough relative to investment, (d) piloting new interventions relevant for targeted impact groups, (e) improving the effectiveness of implementation systems, or (f) improving efficiency in use of resources. The evaluation process prioritized recommendations and ensured as much as possible that they are implementable within the time frame remaining and with the resources available for the program.

Investigations during the MTE focused on (a) evaluating the quality and effectiveness of program delivery, (b) presenting evidence of changes (intended and unintended, positive and negative) associated with activity interventions and outputs and assessing how well the observed changes reflect the Theory of Change (TOC) and logical framework, (c) reviewing systems for capturing and documenting lessons learned and assessing the extent to which they are used in program implementation and refining program design, (d) determining the extent to which outcomes, systems and services are designed and being implemented to continue after the program ends, (e) determining the appropriateness and effectiveness of support for gender equity in terms of access to, participation in, and benefit from program interventions, (f) assessing the extent to which program interventions target youth, support greater capacities for local governance and address sources of environmental risk, and (g) recommending adjustments to the Theory of Change (ToC) and logical framework, activity design, resource allocation, activity management, Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) Plan, or implementation that could improve the likelihood of achieving sustainable results by the program's end.

Volume II of the MTE Report contains the Terms of Reference for the MTE and the MTE Protocol which provides more detail on the purpose, objectives and evaluation process.

**2. MTE Team.** The SHOUHARDO III MTE was implemented by a team fielded by TANGO International which included an independent consultant MTE Team leader, two senior staff from

TANGO, and two independent consultants from Bangladesh<sup>6</sup>. Each of the consultants has more than 30 years of experience in development programming. Due to other commitments, one team member was not available for the first three days of field data collection. CARE provided a technical staff member<sup>7</sup> from the program to fill in within data collection over this period. He was able to work with the TANGO team member during the first few days of the evaluation to understand the process and data collection tools. The MTE Protocol in the MTE Report, Volume II, contains more background on the team as well as details on assigned responsibilities for each team member.

**3. MTE Schedule and Process.** The MTE was undertaken in three phases:

- Phase 1: Evaluation Preparation (Late October 2017 through 11 February 2018)
- Phase 2 (in Bangladesh): Data Collection & Analysis (12 February through 12 March 2018)
- Phase 3: Evaluation Recommendations Finalization (13 March through 15 June 2018)

Actual implementation schedules, including the full schedule for the MTE as well as the field schedule for data collection, are provided in the MTE Report, Volume II. Details on the various activities undertaken in each phase are also provided in Volume II.

Qualitative methods, including key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and activity observations, were used to gather information from a variety of sources at multiple levels.

- Interviews were held with implementing staff and program stakeholders based in Dhaka
- Interviews were held with program-level implementing staff and stakeholders based in each region in Sirajganj for the Char Region and in Kishoreganj for the Haor Region
- Interviews were held with district-level implementing staff and stakeholders from each of the six implementing partners in Sirajganj, Gaibandha, Jamalpur, Kurigram, Kishoreganj and Sunamganj.
- Interviews or focus group discussions were held in 26 villages in 26 Unions and 17 upazilas with program participants and community leaders. Table 2 summarizes the mix of sites visited for data collection relative to the selection criteria for the sample. Six of the sites, one in each district, were villages that had participated in SHOUHARDO I.

**Table 2. Characteristics of Sites Selected for the MTE Data Collection**

SAMPLE SELECTION CRITERIA <sup>8</sup>		PERFORMANCE			
		Good	Average	Low	TOTAL
ACCESSIBILITY	Easy	4	7	4	15
	Moderate	1	3	1	5
	Remote	2	1	3	6
	TOTAL	7	11	8	26

An estimated 1,271 participants, implementing staff and representatives of program stakeholders were consulted by the MTE team in the interviews and focus group discussions described above.

To try to get a sense for unintended outcomes being generated by program activities, the MTE scheduled five focus group discussions with women or youth non-participants who would be classified as poor or extreme poor. The discussions revealed, however, that while the participants were not participating in program activities, in most cases, someone from their household was participating. The

<sup>6</sup> Mike DeVries (Team Leader & Independent Consultant), Mark Langworthy (Vice President, TANGO), Jeanne Downen (Vice President, TANGO), Rukhsana Haider (Independent Consultant) and Golam Kabir (Independent Consultant).

<sup>7</sup> Khaledul Ahsan, Technical Manager for Social and behavioral Change Communications for the Haor Region.

<sup>8</sup> Details on the definition of these criteria are provided in the MTE Protocol in Volume II of this report.

MTE scheduled focus groups A detailed list of these respondents is provided in the MTE Report, Volume II.

Major observations and preliminary recommendations were presented to SHOUHARDO III Program staff for verification and refinement in a Verification Workshop to ensure that the observations reflected reality and the recommendations were relevant, realistic and achievable, given the resources and time available for the program. The MTE Team reviewed the full list of recommendations developed to this point and, based on information from the workshop<sup>9</sup>, as well as additional information from the program management team, formulated a priority list of recommendations organized around major themes for the remaining life of the program. These were presented to the leadership of the organizations implementing SHOUHARDO III and finally to USAID Bangladesh representatives.

**3. MTE Limitations.** The primary limitation for the SHOUHARDO III MTE was the time available in-country for data collection and analysis. During the initial planning stages, it was thought that the MTE team would visit four districts, two in each region. As the planning continued, however, it became apparent that the team should visit at least one district for each of the six partners. The original period planned for data collection in four districts had to be changed to accommodate visits to six districts, forcing the field work period to be concentrated on data collection with no time for analysis until after the data was collected. In an ideal world, for every two days of qualitative data collection, there should be one day of data processing. For the SHOUHARDO III MTE, the team conducted interviews and focus-group discussions for nineteen continuous days. Intensive processing of the data did not start until after the completion of the field work. With hindsight, it would also have been good to have collected data in all eight districts, since the second district for each partner in the Haor Region likely receives less monitoring and support since the partner does not have staff based in these districts.

The MTE was fortunate in that the weather allowed the team to visit nearly all of the sites that had been selected for field visits. Two of the initial twenty-eight sites selected were not visited mainly due to underestimates on the time required to reach the sites, and the need to conduct unscheduled interviews with staff or other program participants identified during the field work, including participants in youth skills training. The only limitation that threatened to show itself during the evaluation was the possibility that male participants in the Haor Region would be too engaged in the rice harvest to be able to participate in focus group discussions. This threat did not materialize, however. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions were organized quite well for the MTE.

#### **D. Structure of the Report**

The report on the SHOUHARDO III MTE has been prepared in two volumes. Volume I (this document) is the MTE Summary Report which documents background information on the program and MTE, a summary of program progress, a description of the sixteen priority recommendations organized around major themes, brief descriptions of some higher-level observations by the MTE team that go beyond the SHOUHARDO III Program, and brief concluding remarks. Annex B to this report provides additional observations followed by relevant recommendations generated by the MTE that did not make the short-list of prioritized recommendations. These are still useful, however, for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the program. Volume II is the MTE Methodology Report which contains the Terms of Reference for the MTE, the MTE Protocol, and the full list of persons interviewed and sites observed for data collection in the MTE.

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<sup>9</sup> Over 100 recommendations were presented over the two days of the workshop. Immediately after the workshop, based on discussions held during the workshop, these were reduced to a full list of 94 recommendations; and from this list, an initial list of 17 priority recommendations was moved on to the next step in the MTE process, the Stakeholder Debriefing.

### III. SUMMARY OF PROGRAM PROGRESS

The following sections describe the main findings from the MTE on the progress of the SHOUHARDO III Program toward meeting output targets as well as the emerging outcomes that were observed.

#### A. Purpose 1: Agriculture & Livelihoods

Under Purpose 1, the SHOUHARDO III Program is building the capacities of community-based Community Agriculture Volunteers (CAVs) to organize and provide technical training to a variety of different types of groups related to farm production and income-generation. These groups include (a) a variety of Farmer Field and Business Schools, (b) groups organized to provide a platform for training related to off-farm income-generation activities, and (c) Village Savings and Loans Associations. In addition to these groups, the SHOUHARDO III Program also identified youth for vocational skills training and also employed persons from PEP households in cash-for-work activities associated with Purpose 3 for constructing small-scale disaster risk reduction infrastructure. Table 3 describes the progress of the program in forming the various groups under Purpose 1.

**Table 3: Participants and Targets under Purpose 1**

Type of Participant/Site		Current Total	Membership/Sex		LOA Participants Target
			Female	Male	
Community Agriculture Volunteers		956	382	574	956
Farmer Field and Business Schools	Field Crops - Maize	1,311	2963	10,109	26,103
	Field Crops – Chili		1051	3504	3262
	Field Crops – Pumpkin		1177	1630	3264
	Homestead Development	1,303	23,698	2249	32,214
	On-Farm IGA	3,072	34,264	7958	79,295
	Fisheries (Capture or Culture)	384	148	3482	9505
Participants in Off-Farm IGA Groups		9793	4708	5085	14,877
Participants in Cash for Work Activities (Number of participants unavailable, only person-days of work)		63,754	26,754	37,000	150,000
Youth participants in vocational and life skills training		860	177	683	10,000
Village Savings and Loan Associations		944	26,447	670	947
Micro-seed sellers (Small shops)		67	2	65	170
Micro-seed dealers (Wholesalers)		9	5	4	30

The MTE found that there is some nice impact being generated in some parts of the program, but the quality is spotty (good in some districts but not in others), and the impact is better for some types of PEP households, e.g., those with access to land, than for others, e.g., households in the deep char. The following sections describe the observations of the MTE on outcomes emerging from program outputs under Purpose 1.

I. Observations on Outcomes. The SHOUHARDO III Program provides technical training on new ideas and technologies complemented by cash transfer input support to facilitate practice by participants of the new ideas and technologies being promoted. The MTE observed some nice impact being generated from some new ideas and technologies, including plant spacing, seed density, hand pollination, knowledge

transfer on goat PPR<sup>10</sup> and vaccination, and chicken nesting (*hajol*) technologies, and the input support enabled participants to put these ideas into practice. In the program's Beneficiary-Based Survey System for 2017<sup>11</sup>, 78.9% of respondents reported that they had higher production in 2017 than in 2016, but this statistic needs to be qualified by the fact that many respondents received cash transfer input support in 2017 and none in 2016. A more informative statistic is that almost 100% of crop farmers (participants in field crop FFBSs) reported that they had adopted at least three new ideas or technologies being promoted by the program.



Duck Eggs in the Haor

The MTE found that the cash transfer input support is being used as intended. After completing a business plan with a program staff member and opening a bank account with Bank Asia, a participant is eligible to receive a cash transfer of BDT 3000 (around \$36) if they have been classified as “poor” in the program's well-being analysis or BDT 4500 (around \$54), if they have been classified as “extreme poor”. With any cash transfer, there is a risk that the money will be used for purposes other than intended purposes or the transfer will cultivate expectations on the part of participants for more handouts or a dependency on handouts. The MTE found that neither of these risks were being realized in the SHOUHARDO III Program. The business planning process is directing the cash transfers toward investments, and participants clearly viewed the input support as capital and were using the cash as planned, not for other uses. While the cash transfers in combination with business planning and some useful technical knowledge is effective, the cash transfer process in

SHOUHARDO III is cumbersome, with lots of paperwork. It was reported that a cash transfer requires completion of as many as eight different forms by the CAV and program's Field Facilitator before the transfer can be made. The business plans are helping to support effective use of the cash transfer, but the business plan document is overly complicated and not used after the input support is obtained. The concept of business planning is more important than the form.

The fisheries component of the program has been operating with technical support from WorldFish for around nine months at the time of the MTE. For culture fisheries, there are some nice technologies being promoted, including seasonal pond culture using an eco-pond approach, cultivating micro-habitats for fish in small bodies of water, cage culture in larger bodies of water, pens in small canals, and promoting rapid growing species such as tilapia, but advocacy in the program for access to water bodies for PEP households is not strong. For capture fisheries, the modules are focused on training on laws that restrict capture fisheries in the short term, and there are not many program interventions that actually increase income for capture fishers. This is particularly problematic in the deep haor, where issues for capture fishers are predominantly related to access to fishing grounds controlled by powerful people<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> *Peste des Petits Ruminants*, also known as ‘sheep and goat plague’, is a viral disease of goats and sheep characterized by fever, sores in the mouth, diarrhea, pneumonia, and often death. It is caused by a morbillivirus, in the family of paramyxoviruses, that is related to rinderpest, measles and canine distemper.

<sup>11</sup> CARE SHOUHARDO III BBSS 2017 Final Report, 30 October 2017

<sup>12</sup> Access to fishing grounds is a common problem across the Haor Region. The government leases out water bodies. Since most fishermen do not have enough money to take a lease, the lease is usually given by the government to a wealthy person. These wealthy persons have much influence and an active cadre of musclemen (*mastaan*) to discourage competition for the leases they hold.

In addition to the FFBS's listed, there are also rice FFBS's in the Haor Region that are receiving technical training on water management and seedling density, as well as cash transfer input support which is used by participants for rice production inputs. The PEP participants are not landowners, but predominantly sharecroppers, receiving 50-50 terms on production. The MTE also found sharecroppers in the Char Region producing maize and other crops, but these sharecroppers reported the more equitable and legally-mandated sharecropping terms of 1/3-1/3-1/3<sup>13</sup>.

"I am assisting the group to buy seed and fertilizer together and I am responsible to sell the produce at a good price. When we sell this year, I will check the market for the price and then go to a buyer that we used last year to negotiate the same price. Because we have much to sell, the buyer will come here to purchase the maize at the market price and he will be responsible for transport."

Group Leader for a Maize FFBS in Kirtaniatari

The program plans to undertake activities to facilitate access to *khas*<sup>14</sup> land for PEP households, but this activity has not yet been started. None of the respondents in interviews or focus group discussions conducted by the MTE reported this as a benefit facilitated by the program.

For VSLAs, most of the 944 existing VSLAs have been in place for less than six months. There are a few that have been operating for a year, but they appear to have been formed before the current VSLA strategy was developed and reflect more the Self-Help Group approach that SHOUHARDOs I and II used. Most VSLAs are keeping their capital funds in a bank account. This links the VSLA to a bank and in the long run, it should certainly be part of the vision for a VSLA. One of the VSLA's interviewed by the MTE, however, is using the standard three-key lock box for keeping the capital. This approach is used where banks are quite distant from the VSLA, but it also makes it easier to conduct transactions. This particular group was highly enthusiastic about the trust that this lock-box created for the group. They said that "we know where our money is and it is very well-protected with the three keys". There are arguments to be made that, at least in the first cycle, a lock-box be used to build trust and transparency.

Marketing interventions, both on the input supply side and product marketing side, are delivered mostly through the groups that have been formed, with a particular focus on building the capacities of group leaders to coordinate marketing activities on behalf of the group. The MTE found some very good, sustainable impact already being generated by this intervention. A consistent pattern was observed, especially with Maize FFBSs in the Char Region and with On-Farm IGA FFBSs and Comprehensive



New Shop for an Off-Farm IGA Participant

Homestead Development FFBSs in both regions, with group leaders independently organizing bulk purchase of seed or animal vaccine by collating orders from group members and negotiating purchase of inputs/vaccination services at a fair price with input suppliers/vaccinators. Consistent reports were also received of group leaders organizing the sale of production by understanding the volume available from members, visiting markets to determine prices, negotiating collective sale prices with buyers, and organizing farm-gate sales with buyers. In the 2017 Beneficiary-Based Survey System<sup>15</sup>, 66.7% of

<sup>13</sup> One third of the crop to the landowner, one-third of the crop to the sharecropper for providing labor, and one-third of the crop to whoever provides inputs, usually the sharecropper.

<sup>14</sup> *Khas* land is owned by government that is legally supposed to be made available to extreme poor households. Much of this land, however, is already occupied by "squatters" or controlled by wealthy individuals.

<sup>15</sup> CARE SHOUHARDO III BBSS 2017 Final Report, 30 October 2017

respondents reported improved market access, up from 50.0% reported in 2016.

The MTE also observed an Off-Farm IGA Group that was focused on tailoring as the IGA of choice. The program had facilitated technical training on tailoring and the cash transfer input support was used for working capital. The group had organized themselves to facilitate collective marketing of the products produced as well as solicitation of clothing orders. The group was composed of all women, and the marketing function was served by the spouse of one of the members.

As with FFBSs, cash transfer input support for the Off-Farm IGA groups is being provided after completion of a business plan, and this cash is used to increase working capital usually for an existing income-generating activity. Respondents reported some benefit received from the training provided by the program. The most often mentioned benefits were managing receivables, keeping ledgers, and being customer-oriented.

The MTE observed some very nice impact generated by the program with petty trade activities managed by PEP participants that had expanded from small household-based petty trade to more well-stocked shops. The cash transfer input support provided by the program was leveraged with wholesalers who normally provide an equivalent value in advanced stock to match stock purchased with cash. The more visible shop also facilitates expansion of the IGA to other services such as the BKash electronic money transfer service.

“Definitely we knew how to do business before the project came, but after receiving the training, we give more importance to how to treat the customer, which is increasing our business.”

Off-Farm IGA Group FGD  
Participant in Paschim Wapda  
Bandh

In addition to business management training, the SHOUHARDO III Program is also providing technical training for some IGAs. The recruitment of private sector-based trainers for training on tailoring seems quite effective in some areas, especially since the relationships established during the training between trainees and trainer are continuing after the training has ended.

For the 860 youth participants who have participated in technical training support through the GoB Technical Training Centers and contracted trainers from the private sector, the program is not providing input support for these trainees, so they have to find other means to be able to purchase the inputs required, e.g., sewing machines, in order to put their training to work. In the groups interviewed by the MTE, some had been able to procure the required inputs through loans from family members to start an IGA. As far as marketing their products and services, nearly all respondents indicated that marketing is not a problem. Obtaining the inputs is a bigger constraint. None of these participants were found to have been linked to a VSLA whereby they might be able to access capital.

Cash-for-Work (CFW) in the SHOUHARDO III Program is being used to build DRR infrastructure related to action plans developed under Purpose 3. The program does not have information on the total number of participants in CFW activities. The total number of person-days of work completed by the time of the MTE was 63,754. GoB funds are being used to finance the CFW, and the wage rate that is being provided is substantially below the market wage rate for daily wage labor in order not to disrupt local labor markets. The CFW implemented by SHOUHARDO III is not being integrated into the GoB safety net programs, so it is inherently not sustainable, nor is there much long-term impact from this intervention in terms of the impact of the cash on household food security.

**2. Observations on the Sustainability of Outcomes.** Many of the FFBSs are already operating fairly independent of program support, with group leaders facilitating bulk purchase of inputs and collective marketing of production without program support. As long as individual members of these groups continue to realize benefits from group participation with cheaper prices for inputs and better prices for production, the groups will continue to function after the program ends. It is difficult to assess the

sustainability of VSLAs that have yet to complete one cycle. Early indications are, however, based on respondents' savings activities and their expressed lack of enthusiasm for the VSLA, most will not continue after the program ends, except in a few locations where more elements of VSLA best practice are being implemented, e.g., Kurigram District. The youth skills training that is being provided by the program is effective. However, the other dimensions of youth employment, e.g., job counseling, marketing training for self-employment, and job placement assistance, are not being implemented by the program, so the sustainability of the impact generated by the program will depend on the initiative of individual participants. CFV is inherently not sustainable and the little bit of impact generated from the cash disbursed will not be sustained.

## B. Purpose 2: Health, Hygiene and Nutrition

Under Purpose 2, a formative analysis was conducted resulting in a comprehensive Social and Behavioral Change Communications strategy to guide implementation of activities for the following five types of interventions.

1. *Awareness of HHN issues promoted*, including through courtyard sessions, counseling through household visits, engagement of youth, religious and other leaders, and school-based teen brigades, and implementation of growth monitoring and promotion sessions at community clinics (CCs), extended program of immunization (EPI) centers, and community spots.
2. *Supplementary rations provided among for households with PLW*
3. *Linkages developed between community and health service providing organizations/providers*
4. *Community supported to construct/install WASH structures*
5. *Advocacy done with GoB/local government to improve WASH support and services*

Table 4 shows the progress of the program relative to key participants and targets under Purpose 2.

**Table 4. Participants and Targets under Purpose 2**

Type of Participant/Site	Current Total	Membership/Sex		LOA Target
		Female	Male	
Community Health Volunteers (CHV)	956	956	0	956
Community Groups (CG)	762	228	534	2280
Participants in Courtyard Sessions (for dietary diversity, importance of nutritious food, good WASH practices, improved household latrines)	40,780	40,780	0	52,681
Participants in cooking and feeding demonstrations	50,141	50,141	0	40,780
Community Support Groups for health and nutrition (CSG)	834	293	541	3420
Food ration recipients	40,780	40,780	0	52,681
Private Health Service Providers	0	---	---	120
Village leaders including the VDC and others (awareness related to intra-household food distribution, improved household latrine demonstrations, and Community-led Total Sanitation)	9647	5560	4087	9647
Upazila Health Complex for Severe Acute Malnutrition and Integrated Management of Childhood Illness corners	23	Not Available		23
VDCs implementing health advocacy campaigns	947	Not Available		947

I. Observations on Outcomes. The HHN component of the program seems to be well on target as far as the number of courtyard sessions, other group meetings, and household visits are concerned. Staff know and share the promotion messages whenever indicated. Beneficiaries interviewed and participants in focus group discussions appreciated the information provided. Grandmothers reported their changed behavior, such as sharing household chores, and allowing pregnant daughters-in-law an afternoon rest, while PLWs reported eating more in pregnancy, including snacks from the supplementary rations. The program's monitoring systems<sup>16</sup> found that the percentage of households giving women more food and rest had increased from 11% to 20% in the last two years, the use of iron and folic acid supplementation had increased by 11% and exclusive breastfeeding for children under six months had reached 75% from a baseline of 42%. Mothers Group sessions however, showed one-way messaging, with no sharing of experiences or problem identification for follow-up. Men's Groups talked about "nutrition", health and hygiene, and farmers in the FFBS sessions about vegetables and foods that are good for health<sup>17</sup>. Adolescent girls were enthusiastic, confident, had learned about menstrual hygiene, types of nutrients, and as about half were EKATA members, were proud of actions they had undertaken (stopping/reporting eve teasing<sup>18</sup> and child marriage). The HHN issues were also reported to be addressed in sessions held with groups under other program purposes.

Mothers of infants under six months of age reported exclusive breastfeeding, although observations of CHVs' household visits lacked actual "counseling" (no listening or confidence building, no identification of problems and suggested solutions). Generic messages were repeated or irrelevant messages given (for example, complementary feeding messages to a mother of a 45-day old infant). There was no checking/demonstrating position and attachment for breastfeeding to PLWs or for age appropriate complementary feeding practices (diversity, amount, frequency, consistency) which seemed inadequate, and no interaction with household members. The accompanying Field Facilitators did not supplement the observed gaps.

The school-based teen brigades reported promoting prioritized HHN behavior among their peers, family members and community through rallies carrying posters and placards. A youth group said they too were trying to influence positive social/gender norms regarding health and nutrition behaviors.

GMP sessions could be observed only at community spots as the government staff of Community Clinics were on strike. Insufficient information provision was observed, with little attempt to identify reasons for growth faltering, along with inaccuracies in taking measurements and plotting. Mothers said they attended the community-based/ satellite sessions regularly to see how their child is growing, but it was not easy to travel to Community Clinics all the time. There were positive reports from women and adolescent girls about awareness and demand for equitable allocation of household food, timely access for healthcare, and joint decision making in the family. Beneficiaries were also aware about the importance of good hygienic practices, of avoiding the harmful practice of open defecation, and keeping children away from animal and poultry feces.

While the provision and monitoring of supplementary rations among PLW's families was well established, mothers reported that these rations lasted for only around 20 days because of sharing with

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<sup>16</sup> FLAIRB (Longitudinal Survey Data) comparison of Round 1 data (collected in June/July 2017) and Round 2 data (conducted in Dec-Jan2018), provided by the SHOUHARDO III M&E Unit

<sup>17</sup> Training session #4 in the FFBS training curriculum includes modules on the concept of malnutrition and on food groups and nutrition.

<sup>18</sup> "Eve teasing" is a euphemism used in South Asia for sexual harassment or molestation of women by men in a public place. Eve teasing ranges in severity from sexually suggestive remarks, brushing in public places and catcalls, to outright groping.

family members. They also reported that much time<sup>19</sup> was required to collect rations, and cash was required for milling the wheat and transportation expenses. It seems doubtful that the PLWs are regularly obtaining the 800 Kcal/day calculated for fulfilling their nutrition gaps.

Good linkages have been developed between communities and GoB health service providers. CHVs mobilize PLWs for attending Community Clinics and EPI sessions, assist the GoB Community Health Care Provider in GMP sessions where they are functioning, and facilitate and participate in GoB's programs and events. Program Technical Officers and Senior Technical Coordinators communicate regularly with senior level GoB staff including the Civil Surgeon, the Deputy Director for Family Planning, and the Union Health and Family Planning Officer, participate in district level nutrition coordination and Health and Family Planning meetings, and take GoB staff on field visits with resultant immediate action at the field level. Advocacy for functional Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) corners in Upazila Health Complexes is ongoing. There has been no coordination, however, with other NGOs to prevent overlapping of activities. Hand washing at critical times is promoted, but it is not yet fully understood and followed. Despite this being a felt need of the beneficiaries, the outputs related to WASH, both for infrastructure and for advocacy, are lagging behind due to resource constraints. The MTE did not hear about any courtyard sessions held with men's groups, specifically for water and sanitation issues. Communities were linked with DPHE through the PNGO staff and VDCs, but the relationships are too preliminary to bring about change in the WASH situation. Nevertheless, the DPHE in coordination with District Administration has plans for supporting tube wells and latrines each year throughout the district based on government criteria for allocating resources, and VDCs strengthened by the program are expected to advocate for allocation of these resources to critical WASH needs by the end of the program.

**2. Observations on the Sustainability of Outcomes.** Although increased awareness about optimal HHN practices may be somewhat sustainable, it will need to be continually reinforced at community level until the behavioral practices are internalized. Continuous reinforcement of the messages is still required, especially on increasing dietary diversity and increasing the amount of food for both PLWs and children aged 6-23 months. The linkages established with the GOB health services, especially for GMP sessions will help the transition of community-based activities to the government's health services. Continued distribution of commodities however, is not required nor sustainable. The Civil Surgeon in Kurigram District, for example, told the MTE that *"two years should be enough for commodities - stop and merge with GOB programs"*.

### C. Purpose 3: Disaster and Climate Risk Management

The activities under Purpose 3 address strengthening the disaster and climate risk management systems that support communities and households to prepare contingency plans and provide/obtain early warning of shocks. Under the PIIF, investments in disaster-resilient infrastructures (pipe culverts, U-drains, school cum flood shelters, and brick mound protection walls) and promotion of climate-smart technologies (improved cook stoves) are also included under Purpose 3. The program has achieved targets for the numbers of different types of participants for Purpose 3 as shown in Table 5. At this point, the program needs to focus on the sustainability of these investments to continue after the program ends.

**Table 5: Participants and Targets under Purpose 3**

Type of Participant/Site	Current Total	Membership/Sex		LOA Target
		Female	Male	

<sup>19</sup> The MTE heard a number of times that one day could be spent on traveling to the distribution site, collecting the ration and then taking the wheat to the mill. Another day was required for someone to collect the ground wheat and bring it home.

Entrepreneurs in Union Digital Centers (UDCs)	230	115	115	230
Union Disaster Volunteers	4140	2070	2070	4140
Village Development Committees (for DCRM capacity building, community action plans, resource mobilization, and lobbying)	947	5560	4087	947
School-Based Teen Brigades	46	920	920	Pilot
Union Disaster Management Committees (for DCRM capacity building and lobbying)	115	Not Available		115
Upazila Disaster Management Committees	23	Not Available		23

I. Observations on Outcomes. The program has been quite successful in providing support to strengthen the capacities of communities to prepare for and respond more effectively to support households when natural disasters do occur. All of the VDCs have undertaken initial community risk assessments and have developed community action plans to address these identified risks. Several interviewed VDCs reported that they were actively involved in organizing community responses to floods, organizing distribution of materials and ensuring that vulnerable individuals (women, elderly) were provided with adequate shelter.

Awareness of disaster preparedness messages promoted by the program is high in the villages. All village groups organized by the program have received training modules on disaster risk management and preparation, and non-participant households are aware of the disaster risk management role of the VDCs in their communities. VDC members and members of UDMCs reported that the communities that have program-supported VDCs are better able to get access to support in times of emergencies, including requests for supplies for community members, and are more prepared for disasters.

The School-Based Teen Brigades (SBTBs) that were interviewed reported that they have been very engaged in providing messages about contingency planning and disaster preparedness to members of their communities, through discussions of these issues with their family members and neighbors, and through more formal messaging campaigns.

A comprehensive early warning system is being developed by the program from the sources of early warning information from relevant local government agencies and linking them with VDCs at the village level. The program links together the relevant sources of early warning information for floods and weather, supporting disaster risk management committees at upazila and union levels, supporting union disaster volunteers, providing support to the entrepreneurs of the union digital centers to get access to weather and flood information from online sources, and linking these entrepreneurs to the union disaster management committees and disaster volunteers. The evaluation team found that awareness of access to emergency hotline phone numbers is high among all community members in program areas, based on messaging of the program through all of the community-based groups.

While the early warning system functions well in communities supported by the program, the extent to which this system can be extended to other communities and supported beyond the life of the program is a concern. Villages that do not have program-supported VDCs do not participate as effectively in early warning and response activities. In addition, there is no clear strategy for extending and sustaining the support provided to union disaster volunteers beyond the program supported communities and past the end of the program.

The program has invested in several disaster resilient types of infrastructure, including culverts and U-drains along roads, school-cum-flood shelters, brick-mound protection walls, and raising homestead levels. The procedure followed by the program is to identify demand for these investments based on community action plans developed by the VDCs, and then to undertake technical and environmental feasibility assessments for the investments, including assessments of the number of individuals that will

benefit from these households. This strategy ensures that the investments will address the highest needs, while at the same time being feasible given local conditions and risks.

The evaluation team did note that a number of such investments made by previous CARE programs in the char areas had been destroyed or lost from flooding and shifting of char areas<sup>20</sup>. Some areas that were on char land in previous projects have been completely washed away and are now under water. These observed post-investment events and resulting losses demonstrate that risks associated with such investments in char areas are very high and should be appropriately incorporated into future investment decisions in these areas.

The program includes an activity to promote fuel-efficient cooking stoves as a way to reduce the use of wood resources. The evaluation team did not observe any adoption of these stoves in the field. The only fuel-efficient stove observed by the team was in a program office. The MTE observed that the emphasis on promoting these cook stoves was given relatively lower priority than other program activities. The evaluation team considers this appropriate, given that limited program resources, and activities should be more focused on addressing fundamental underlying causes of vulnerability and lack of resilience capacities of households, communities and local government agencies. In addition, community members, in discussions about their major problems and challenges, did not mention lack of fuel-efficient stoves as a major problem.

The program provides extensive support to the disaster management committees at both the upazila and union levels. Training has been provided to the members of these committees, and the program facilitates the meetings of these committees and coordinates the agendas of these meetings, which raises concerns about post-program sustainability of these meetings. Program staff asserted that the union level committees are much more engaged with the program, while at the upazila level, it is much more difficult to effectively engage with the committees, because of other responsibilities for committee members and limited time to engage with the program. These differences in the level of engagement by the committees at the upazila and union levels were also observed by the evaluation team. Interviews with the upazila level committees revealed that the types of support provided by the program were field visits and focus group interviews in communities, not the training provided to the committee members.

2. Sustainability of Outcomes. The activities of the program under Purpose 3 have demonstrably improved the ability of program-supported communities and households to prepare for and respond to shocks. However, there are serious concerns about the sustainability of these interventions. At the community level, the VDCs play an important role in developing plans to help communities prepare for and respond to natural shocks and climate stresses. With project support they are effectively executing these activities. However, the extent to which these committees will continue these activities without program support is not clear. In interviews, the VDC members indicated that they plan to continue these activities, but their responses were as individual members of the committees. They did not have a clear conception that the committees should continue as institutions. Without a clear vision of the need for the villages to sustain these committees, it is not obvious that they will continue as individual members drop out from the VDCs.

It is also important to note that a large number of VDC members also participate in other community groups (EKATA, VSLA, livelihood groups, youth groups, etc). This membership in VDCs and other program-supported groups helps to increase the awareness of the VDCs about the other kinds of activities that the program is supporting and helps the VDC to serve as a voice for the interests of the other community groups and their members in their role as a link with local government representatives.

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<sup>20</sup> The MTE conducted data collection activities in six villages (one in each of the six districts visited) that had participated in SHOUHARDO I. There is no overlap between SHOUHARDO II and SHOUHARDO III.

At the union and upazila government levels, the program has strengthened the operations of the disaster management committees and union disaster volunteers. However, at the time of the MTE, there is no strong evidence of a strategy for how the support provided to these government structures can be sustained internally by these government institutions. While there is a clear understanding on the part of the importance of these activities on the part of the participants, there is not a clear pathway to find alternative resources to support and continue the kinds of support provided by the program after the program itself ends.

#### **D. Purpose 4: Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality**

Purpose 4 is designed to empower 33,000 women and girls by addressing the economic and social inequalities they face and by reducing gender-based violence (GBV). This will be accomplished through two sub-purposes: (i) the creation of a supportive environment for women's empowerment, and (ii) strengthened agency of women to take action within a stronger enabling environment. Purpose 4 has achieved its LoA targets as shown in Table 6 and is on track to realize considerable gains in women's empowerment. Ensuring the sustainability of these gains requires some attention to establishing a solid foundation for some of its major outputs.

**Table 6: Participants and Targets under Purpose 4**

Type of Participant/Site	Current Total	Membership/Sex		LOA Target
		Female	Male	
EKATA Groups	947	33,145	0	947
Men from households represented in EKATA Groups	Not Available	0	Not Available	No target
VDCs (for gender-based violence and women's empowerment action plans)	947	5560	4087	947
Representatives from Union Parishads	440	101	339	440
Representatives from Nation Building Departments	345	Not Available		345
Union Parishad Nari Nirjaton Protirodh Committees	115	Not Available		115

**I. Observations on Outcomes.** Women participating in SHOUHARDO III are undergoing a transformation that is changing their perspectives, their personal and community lives, and having a broader impact on their spouses, children, and in-laws. Women in the program have increased confidence, decision-making power, mobility, and expanded opportunities for community participation. The EKATA groups, facilitated by Community Empowerment Volunteers (CEVs), are serving as multi-purpose platforms to build women's confidence, enhance their life skills, and increase income generation through FFBS training in vegetable and livestock production. In focus group discussions during the MTE, women confirmed that their new skills and increased income have enhanced their status and perceived value in their households and enabled them to have greater say over decisions on income. The 2017 Beneficiary-Based Survey System<sup>21</sup> reports a slow upward trend in the mean decision-making score (index) for women at the household level, from 20.79 in 2016 to 25.6 in 2017, indicating that there is room for more progress in this area. Women's participation in community forums shows greater gains, with 37% of women accessing community platforms in FY17 from almost zero in 2016, in part due to female membership of 50% or more in VDCs. In field interviews, women attested that EKATA training has given them awareness of their inherent worth and thus the confidence to speak up at home and in the community.

<sup>21</sup> CARE SHOUHARDO III BBSS 2017 Final Report, 30 October 2017

At the beginning of the program, EKATA membership was open to any woman who wished to join, and those who joined said they saw it as an opportunity to improve their lives. Most of the adolescent girls in EKATA groups are daughters of the adult members. EKATA membership relies on self-selection from participating PEP households. In field interviews by the MTE, EKATA members appeared to include a range of PEP households, from better-off to poorer women and female-headed households. Members are encouraged to share information from each EKATA group session with other household members (as well as other community members) in order to spread knowledge and to show transparency. In FGDs, women and adolescent girls spoke about how they share the information from each EKATA group session with their husbands, siblings, and other family members, often during family meals.

Communication and mutual support between couples has improved. The Couple's Dialogue sessions provide a structure for couples to talk about more equitable household relationships around labor burdens, how income is spent, and GBV. In interviews, EKATA members and their husbands stated that through the Couple's Dialogues they began communicating for the first time, as the sessions provided the personal space and privacy to talk about their relationship and to find ways to improve it. Attitude change is slow. EKATA members reported that they spent a year or more persuading their husbands but that their spouses are now helping with child care and taking children to school. Husbands of EKATA members and adolescents from program households confirm that household harmony has improved and that joint decisions are being made on income and child care.

Women and youth are receiving training in life skills and vocational skills. Life and vocational skills are a cross-cutting activity housed under Purpose 4 and tailored to the needs of specific groups. Skills for women are part of Purpose 4 training and include communication, decision-making, leadership, family budgeting and confidence to speak in public forums. The activity links youth to local employers and institutions under Purpose 1 and is discussed in detail there. The process of opening up new opportunities to women challenges widely accepted social norms and roles and can be disruptive, at least initially, at the family level. SHOUHARDO III staff have observed that the participation of young wives in skills training and their engagement in self-employment may cause considerable friction within the household with husbands and in-laws. Staff noted that men often feel responsible to provide for their families and will take temporary jobs to ensure a steady stable income, while young women are more often available for local training in the village. One way in which the program can help ease any turbulence related to the transition to a more equal status for women is by layering Couples Dialogues with skills training, which may result in greater impact and sustainability.

Men are becoming engaged as enablers of women's empowerment. A significant innovation since SHOUHARDO II is a greater focus on male engagement as a means of women's empowerment. SHOUHARDO III has strengthened the enabling environment for women by raising awareness among male program participants (and among adolescent boys through School-Based Teen Brigades), who in turn talk to other men about the positive changes in their households. Female participants report that prior to SHOUHARDO III, their husbands did not consider a wife's work important or a heavy labor burden. Program-facilitated dialogues have sensitized men to the realities of women's work and the difficulty carrying out multiple household tasks simultaneously. The inclusion of men in dialogue about women's empowerment is creating an understanding that empowerment benefits men as well as women. However, engaging the time and attention of more men in the community is a challenge, and field staff observed that men will come to listen; but if they don't see an immediate benefit, they will leave. SHOUHARDO III is recruiting male gender champions and finding venues, such as tea shops, where men may be more receptive to spend time listening to messages around gender equality.

Program participants report a significant decrease in GBV and early marriage. A number of focus groups reported that the acceptance of GBV has been reduced (though not eliminated) through awareness

about its negative economic, social and physical impacts. The BBSS<sup>22</sup> confirms that awareness of the consequences of GBV grew from 12.5% in 2016 to 52.82% in 2017, and that in 2017, 45.4% of participants reported that EKATA groups are resolving GBV, one year after their formation. This highlights a strength of the EKATA model in that it links ideas to action to strengthen understanding and support behavior change. In focus group discussions, women and men stated that they had heard public messages against GBV but did not pay much attention until SHOUHARDO III showed them how to respond to GBV by talking to husbands about the negative impacts (especially the economic costs) of domestic violence. Partners report that social pressure from EKATA groups and VDCs is a strong deterrent to GBV and an incentive for behavior change. The program's monitoring systems<sup>23</sup> found that by 2017, 94.93% of VDC Community Action Plans included actions for ending Gender-Based Violence. Religious leaders are also being persuaded that speaking out against GBV is consistent with their religious duties. These combined actions have contributed to a slow decline in the percentage of people who know a neighbor or friend who has experienced domestic violence, from a baseline estimate of 48% to 43% in 2017 as found by the program's monitoring systems. Early marriage has been largely eliminated in program communities. Parents understand the dangers of early marriage for girls, and EKATA groups and VDCs have compiled lists of underage girls for Union Parishad officials to check against marriage registers. Efforts to eliminate dowry have been less successful. People do not pay dowry but give gifts and payments to brides' in-laws "to ensure a good reception and treatment in her new household."

Local decision-makers are more responsive on issues of women's empowerment and GBV. EKATA and VDC groups have advocated with the Union Parishads to gain access to extension services for women, to obtain social protection benefits, and to reduce early marriage. EKATA members report new-found confidence to demand services from the Union Parishad and find that the Union Parishads, as well as staff of nation-building departments, are responsive, though it remains difficult to get service providers to remote communities. The Union Parishad *Nari Nirjatn Protirodh* Committees are slowly understanding their role in reducing GBV, and district-level Office of Women's Affairs representatives are supportive of the program, though their individual level of engagement varies considerably. Overall, there is a steady increase in women's voice in local decision-making. In 2017, the program's monitoring systems<sup>24</sup> found that an estimated 16.5% of women were participating in UP committees and raising issues related to PEP households in contrast to the baseline, which found no women were actively participating (although they were members of these committees).

The many changes that women and men in SHOUHARDO III are experiencing is potentially profound and not without obstacles along the way. While women, especially EKATA groups, enthusiastically embraced principles of gender equality, it took considerable time and persuasion to convince their husbands. At the beginning of the program, many men were suspicious of what women were discussing in EKATA groups and some discouraged their wives' participation. However, women were encouraged to openly discuss their meetings with their husbands, and men gradually became convinced that their wives' participation was not detrimental to them. Women, supported by their EKATA groups, were persistent in their efforts to get their husbands to listen to them and understand gender equality principles, with many saying that it took a year or more of persuasion to convince their husbands to accept changes in the household. Men were also invited to attend open forums and could see how the community was benefitting from multiple other program activities. In FGDs, the majority of men said that they adopted more gender equitable practices at home because they saw that "it was good for the family." This indicates that the program is helping men to shift attitudes about their responsibility to be the sole provider (and thus the sole decision-maker) for the family to accepting that their wives can contribute to the family income, particularly when relieved of some of their household labor burden.

<sup>22</sup> CARE SHOUHARDO III BBSS 2017 Final Report, 30 October 2017

<sup>23</sup> CARE SHOUHARDO III FY 2017 Annual Results Report, Indicator Performance Tracking Table

<sup>24</sup> CARE SHOUHARDO III FY 2017 Annual Results Report, Indicator Performance Tracking Table

This attitude change also acknowledges the burden that men bear as sole supporters and decision-makers in their households, when men agreed that having more discussion and input from their wives contributed to better household decisions. Men's fears about being perceived by other men as not in complete control of the household were mitigated by the widespread participation of most PEP households in SHOUHARDO III communities. While there is always a risk that unanticipated hardships may set back gains in women's social and economic status, at the program midpoint there is evidence that the transition to greater equality between women and men is becoming rooted in SHOUHARDO III communities.

**2. Sustainability of Outcomes.** SHOUHARDO III is changing long-standing attitudes about women's rights and capacity to be full participants in household and community life. Purpose 4 is addressing deep-rooted social issues, and while people intuitively understand that GBV, early marriage and other practices are harmful, they must understand the root causes of these practices in order to explain them to others. Sustainability depends on internalizing the behaviors that support continued benefits and ensuring that there is a deep understanding of the rationale underlying women's empowerment. Field interviews found a wide variation among EKATA members in their ability to explain key concepts, with a number of participants able to explain only the most basic ideas. This affects program quality and sustainability and women's abilities to sustain their gains and to promote broader acceptance of their values. In addition, EKATA groups have a limited vision of what they might do in the future beyond the current activities. The program is addressing this with plans to register the groups with the GoB so that they will be eligible for training and other benefits, which will provide the groups with a focus to help sustainability.

#### **E. Purpose 5: Public Services**

Purpose 5 aims at improved governance toward public services for poor and extreme poor households as well as contributes to the realization of service delivery by the local elected bodies (LEBs) and nation-building departments (NBDs) to other purpose areas of SHOUHARDO III. Purpose 5 activities are designed to support communities in strengthening their awareness of and capacity to demand for services and increase GoB service providers' awareness of the community needs. Purpose 5 is on track in terms of engaging participants as indicated in Table 7.

**Table 7: Participants and Targets under Purpose 5**

Type of Participant/Site	Current Total	Membership/Sex		LOA Target
		Female	Male	
Village Development Committees	947	5560	4087	947
Youth Groups	947	6145	5521	947
Union Parishads which are Locally Elected Bodies	115	101	339	115
Representatives of Nation Building Departments	345	Not Available		345
Program Advisory Coordination Committees	37	Not Available		37

Purpose 5 has to-date mobilized a number of "natural leaders", representing women and men, youth girls and boys who emerged from the VDCs and Youth Groups (known as *Amrai Shakti*) formed at the target community to lead village-level program implementation. VDCs in all 947 program villages were formed followed by development of community action plans based on community risk assessments. Youth Groups in all these villages have also been formed in order to lobby and advocate for government services in favor of the PEPs including addressing violence against women, climate change, environment and resilience.

Members of all 947 VDCs were provided training on organization development, governance, gender, environment, resilience and advocacy, and their roles and responsibilities to leverage services from Union Parishads (UPs) and NBDs for PEP households. The program also facilitated bi-monthly and

annual general meetings of the VDCs and involved them in the implementation of community-led “Quick-Win” activities such as road-side plantations, bamboo bridges, small earthen roads construction with GoB support, and poultry vaccination with support from the livestock department. At the time of the MTE, training on governance had been completed with one-third of the 115 unions and one-sixth of the 23 program upazilas. The program had also facilitated VDC members representation in the five selected UP standing and special committees in each union including Agriculture and Livestock, WATSAN, Education, Health and Family Planning, the UDMC and the NNPC.

UPs are the lowest tier of locally elected bodies and are mandated to provide one-stop services to constituents. The program held inception meetings with UPs followed by orientation sessions in order to make them aware about the program and their role relative to serving PEP households. These meetings and sessions were also attended by the frontline staff of different NBDs including agriculture, livestock, health and family planning. The program provided technical support to the UPs in organizing Union Development Coordination Committee meetings to discuss community concerns and demands for services from the UP and NBDs. In addition, use of Community Score Cards, a two-way community-based participatory tool used for monitoring and performance evaluation of services and social auditing, was facilitated by the program on service delivery of agriculture, livestock and community clinic services, as a pilot initiative.

Establishment of PACCs at the national, divisional, district and upazila levels is a key intervention of the program under Purpose 5. The PACC at the national level is represented by 14 ministries while their officials and staff at the divisional, district and upazila levels are represented in the PACCs at lower levels. Chairmen from program UPs are included in the upazila level PACCs. This PACC composition provides an excellent opportunity for the members of different ministries and their subsidiary departments to interact with their counterparts at different levels. This allows for amplification of the SHOUHARDO III messages through various levels of government.

I. Observations on Outcomes. As a result of the program’s activities, individuals and communities are more aware of public services rights and entitlements, have better access to service providers and have stronger capacities to negotiate for services. Within the program, members of the different groups established by the program (CAVs, CGs, CSGs, CHVs, CEVs, EKATA, VDCs, FFBSs, VSLAs, SBTBs, UDs and Youth Groups) received similar messages on basic services and governance which reinforced awareness across the community. The capacities of VDCs, youth groups, and school-based teen brigades, have been expanded to enable them to mobilize communities to demand services. These activities have complemented the operational approaches of UPs and NBDs to meet the needs of communities within their mandates.

Youth groups together with the VDCs serve as change agents for greater engagement between communities, local government representatives and public service providers. Using sports and cultural events, youth groups are able to reach out to the whole community with information about government services. Respondents in focus group discussions indicated that due to the presence of VDCs and youth groups, communities are more confident in placing demands. UPs, for example, have been convinced by the VDCs and youth groups to use marriage registers as a safeguard against early marriages. The VDC have also effectively mobilized Livestock Department service providers for vaccination campaigns for PEP households engaged in livestock raising.

LEBs, mainly the UP, present the best opportunity for improving service delivery. VDCs have created the space for engagement and open discussion with UPs which has led to better planning and action toward governance. Through UPs, the program has been establishing linkages between PEP households and public health service providers to ensure the presence and support of health department staff to continuously deliver services for PEPs, particularly for PLW and adolescent girls. The FY2017 BBSS<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> CARE SHOUHARDO III BBSS 2017 Final Report, 30 October 2017

reports a significant improvement in the performance of UPs regarding their overall services to PEP households, from 18.55 percent in FY2016 to 44.6 percent in FY2017. The Community Score Card process allows for mutual dialogue between service users and service providers for increasing elements of good governance such as accountability, transparency and participation. This pilot initiative with two PNGOs implementing in four UPs has the potential for scaling up.

The program's interventions toward facilitating a better understanding of the needs of PEP households by NBDs has provided the "pull" to the VDC's "push" for improved services for PEP households. The annual survey<sup>26</sup> using the management score sheet approach to rate the strength of the VDCs showed a much higher score of 63 than the target score of 30 for FY17. The orientation conducted for NBDs under Purpose 5 on good governance accelerated government extension services to the PEP individuals for such services as poultry vaccination, provision of technical training for FFBS, and increased access of PEP individuals to community clinics. This also helped mobilize communities to use health facilities to receive health and nutrition services. The FY2017 BBSS survey indicated that 37.9 percent of PEP households received health and nutrition services from community-level health facilities compared to 27.6 percent in FY2016.

PACC representatives have made visits to SHOUHARDO III sites in both the Char and Haor Regions. This has encouraged communities to advocate for access to public services and continue their individual and community development efforts. It has also applied pressure to frontline staff of the NBDs to provide better services. The upazila level PACC serves as an advocacy platform and provides inclusive space for representatives of PEP households to have a voice on rights and entitlements.

**2. Sustainability of Outcomes.** The sustainability of outcomes is subject to the sustainability of relations that have been built between communities with LEBs and NBDs at all levels. These relationships have already been successful in negotiating entitlements for PEP households to government safety net programs such as vulnerable group development, vulnerable group feeding, widow allowances, old-age allowances. The Youth Groups have also been successful in minimizing cases of early marriage, GBV, eve teasing and dowry.

The program expects that VDCs will serve as examples of the benefits of good governance, and this will catalyze community demand for the same from UPs, their standing committees, and other government levels above the UPs. A positive sign of the sustainability of VDCs and Youth Groups is that these committees and groups have already started leading communities toward positive changes in the lives and livelihoods of PEP households and realizing benefits from these efforts but with significant guidance and support from program staff. Both of these community groups have potential to be leaders in good governance and participation in community development, and they have created space for engagement and open discussion that should lead to better community-based planning and advocacy.

## **F. Cross-Purpose Integration**

Near the end of the first year of implementation in October 2016, the SHOUHARDO III Program conducted a Program Integration Workshop with the specific objectives to (1) identify areas of convergence or support between program purposes, (2) demonstrate how these convergences are acted out or supported, and (3) identify integration gaps within and between program purposes. The program has operationalized the outputs from this workshop into a program planning document called a Program Integration Implementation Framework (PIIF). Like a Detailed Implementation Plan for the life of activity, the PIIF lists the planned program interventions, activities and sub-activities with measurement units and targets. Features that make the PIIF a unique instrument to facilitate cross-purpose integration are information showing how other purposes are to be involved in a specific activity within a single purpose and how activities are supposed to be coordinated across purposes.

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<sup>26</sup> CARE SHOUHARDO III FY 2017 Annual Results Report

This deliberate effort by the SHOUHARDO III Program to achieve significant cross-purpose integration has resulted in a program that is showing quite good integration of messages across purposes. In interviews and focus group discussions with participants under each purpose, the MTE found that health and nutrition messages, messages around disaster preparedness and response, and women's empowerment benefits were commonly understood regardless of the type of group.

## G. Resilience

USAID has a very comprehensive conception of resilience, which focuses on an understanding of the capacities that individuals, households, and communities have to manage and mitigate the negative impacts of shocks and stresses. Previous research undertaken by USAID and others has identified a number of factors that are critical to enhancing the resilience capacities of households and communities. These include wealth (assets and savings), diversification of livelihoods across exposure to different types risks, social capital (networks of trust and cooperation across individuals and households), collective action, human capital, access to information, access to services and infrastructure, disaster preparedness and response systems, local government responsiveness, aspirations, and gender norms. Looking at the overall design and implementation strategy of the SHOUHARDO III Program it is clear that the program has interventions that address each of these components of resilience capacity. Interventions under Purpose 1 support increasing household incomes (so that they can increase wealth), promotes diversification of livelihoods for PEP households, and promotes mobilization of savings through VSLAs. Purpose 2 supports access to health services, provision of training and information on health and nutrition messages. Purpose 3 supports strengthening disaster preparedness and response systems, supports collective action for disaster management, and enhances government responsiveness in relation to disaster management. Purpose 4 interventions strive to increase aspirations of women and remove gender norms that act as barriers to women's empowerment. Purpose 5 addresses strengthening government services and local government responsiveness. The program strategy of working with community groups and committees helps to strengthen social capital among participating households. Thus, resilience is integrally built into the design of the SHOUHARDO III Program. The process of formally integrating program activities through development of the PIIF has helped to ensure that implementation addresses all of these aspects of resilience in an integrated manner. Program staff at all levels were able to articulate some level of understanding of how all interventions help to enhance resilience capacities of PEP households and their communities.

"We lost 100% of our crop last year [due to flash flood]....50% the year before....in the last ten years, we have never before lost all of our crop...but we all have rice planted now after selling some livestock and using our savings to buy seed."

Rice FFBS FGD Participants in  
Natun Krishna Nagar

## H. Cross-Cutting Themes: Gender Equality, Governance, Targeting of Youth and Addressing Environmental Risks

I. Promoting Gender Equality. Gender equality messages and activities are effectively integrated across Purposes 1 to 5, enabling women to acquire skills and knowledge, make choices about their lives, and exercise their rights within a supportive household and community environment. This is done through the program's technical trainings that incorporate information on women's empowerment and through the inclusion of women, their husbands, and other family members (including influential mothers-in-law) in activities specifically tailored to women's needs. In Purpose 1, agricultural and livestock production skills for men and women are coupled with training on land rights, household decision-making, women's mobility, GBV, and nutrition. Focus group participants in the MTE stated that their increased income from FFBS training has empowered them in their households, and that even acquiring modest assets such as a baby goat gives women greater influence in their households. In Purpose 2 and Purpose 4, joint courtyard sessions are held for fathers and grandmothers of children under five to ensure that they

protect pregnant and lactating women by reducing their labor burden and ensuring they get adequate rest and nutrition. In disasters, women face special risks, including limited mobility and ability to make decisions if the husband is absent, as is common in the remote chars and deep haor in the monsoon season. Purpose 3 activities ensure that disaster infrastructure meets the sanitation and protection needs of women and children, and Purpose 4 activities are intended to empower women to be better able to make better decisions. Gender empowerment messages under Purpose 4 also include men and boys. Purpose 5 activities have strengthened links with government departments while making service providers more aware of and responsive to the needs of women in remote communities. VDCs and EKATA groups have successfully mobilized to prevent early marriage with the cooperation of the UP and have obtained better service delivery from health providers to support Purpose 2 activities and from agricultural and livestock extension agents in the UP to provide services to women trained under Purpose 1.

SHOUHARDO III is helping youth to shape a more gender-equitable future through a variety of activities. This includes school-based teen brigades, where adolescent boys and girls learn about gender equality and disseminate its messages in their schools and communities. As a result, parents and students say that harassment of girls in schools has been largely eliminated. EKATA training has raised the aspirations of adolescent girls, who demonstrate an impressive knowledge of their physical development and the dangers of early marriage and are better able than many adults to explain concepts around women's empowerment. In focus group discussions, adolescent girls demonstrated tremendous enthusiasm and motivation to fulfill their aspirations, saying that "I want to finish school, work and earn an income, and then I will think about marriage."

There are some issues with gender integration that require SHOUHARDO III's attention. One weakness observed by the MTE team is that some community volunteers for agriculture and HHN do not recognize the importance of gender equality messages and consequently may be curtailing or dropping the messages from their training sessions. A second issue is the effect of the predominantly male staff in partner organizations. Although partners have female technical officers for Purpose 4, most of the managerial and technical support staff are male, which may contribute to a limited understanding of issues affecting women. SHOUHARDO III staff note that a lack of understanding of gender issues among partners is reflected in issues observed in the youth skills training; and that the program needs an in-depth analysis of whether the manner in which the youth skills training is implemented contributes to women's empowerment or instead reinforces traditional gender norms and exclusion (e.g., when selecting modalities that exclude young women due to mobility and family commitments). The participation of young wives in skills training and subsequent self-employment may cause considerable friction within the household (husband, in-laws). It was observed in field visits that men often feel bound to their 'provider' role, seeking temporary jobs to obtain a stable income, while young women are more often available for local training in the village (not at training institutes); hence, layering couple dialogues with skills training may result in greater impact and sustainability.

**2. Advocacy for Good Governance.** Governance has become a major public priority in Bangladesh<sup>27</sup>. The GoB emphasizes inclusion of civil society organizations in implementing various development agendas including eliminating child labor, expanding social protection, and promoting food security. Consistent with this perspective, the SHOUHARDO III Program good governance interventions are addressing the relevant aspects of good governance such as participation, gender equality, transparency, accountability and efficiency. Specifically, the program under Purpose 5 has been implementing a core of advocacy activities with respect to governance. These include:

- Advocating for logistics supplies for SAM and IMCI corners and community clinics

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<sup>27</sup>Background Paper for the 7th Five Year Plan of the Government of Bangladesh: Governance and Justice, Manzoor Hasan, Jonathan Rose and Sumaiya Khair, February 21, 2015

- Advocating with the DPHE for support to mitigate the arsenic problem
- Advocating with GoB's Flood Forecasting and Warning Center to make early warning information on flooding available in Union Information and Service Centers
- Lobbying with the GoB at various levels for addressing GBV and early marriage

PACCs at the national, divisional, district and upazila levels are the coordination committees for these Purpose 5 activities which catalyze support across civil society organizations, LEBs, NBDs and other stakeholders for an integrated approach to address the governance toward development needs of PEP households. The VDC, Union Development Coordination Committee and the Upazila-level PACC are the key coordination committees in implementation of governance related activities. A fully functional Union Development Coordination Committee which is governed by the UP Act of 2009 and composed of frontline staff of NBDs is critical to promoting the practice of good governance. Annex B contains a more detailed discussion on this institution and a related recommendation from the MTE (see Recommendation B-44 in Annex B).

In addition to the governance work implemented specifically under Purpose 5, the program has also begun implementing activities to advocate for good governance as a cross-cutting theme and to advocate for better services and support for PEPs households. Activities are just beginning, for example, to facilitate eligible PEP households to obtain government *khas* land and work is underway with the DPHE to conduct arsenic testing of tube wells in target communities which ultimately will lead to DPHE replacing wells that have tested positive. Other advocacy related activities that SHOUHARDO III envisions include expanding access to social protection schemes and to public services including health, hygiene and nutrition, water and sanitation, disaster risk reduction, and agriculture and livelihoods. There are limits, however, to how much influence a single program like SHOUHARDO III can have on national level policies and strategies.

**3. Targeting of Youth.** The SHOUHARDO III Program identifies as key target groups, PEP households, women, and youth. Youth are identified as an important target group because they are likely to have less decision-making autonomy and more limited access to resources and other livelihood opportunities compared to non-youth. In addition, youth are considered to be important champions of change, as they are at a point in their own lives where their attitudes and perspectives can be more easily influenced, and as they become older they will in turn become more influential in affecting the attitudes and social norms of younger generations. Overall, the program supports youth by providing support for livelihoods (vocational training, participation in COGs, supporting youth entrepreneurs), training to strengthen agency and empowerment of youth, and training in health, hygiene, and nutrition practices. The program encourages the engagement of youth (age 16-35) in all Five Purposes as shown in Table 8 below. Participation of youth is relatively low in Purpose 3 compared with the other purposes.

**Table 8. Participation of Youth (16-35) in Program Interventions**

PURPOSE	INTERVENTIONS	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
P1	FFBS & IGA Group Participants	3,260	1,525	4,785
	VSLA Group Member	3,514	163	3,677
	Financial Literacy Management Training	787	34	821
	Training on Employability Skills	177	683	860
P2	Adolescent Girls Received Iron & Folic Acid	726	---	726
	Food Ration Participants	3,740	---	3,740
	PLW Counselling	3,672	---	3,672
	Couples Workshop Participants	69	20	89
	Received HH Latrine	82	60	142
P3	DCRM Training	5	2	7
	Infrastructure Management Training	102	143	245

	Community Action Plan Training	7	11	18
P4	EKATA Group Member	2,894	---	2,894
	Referral linkage Workshop-empowerment	94	19	113
P5	VDC Group Member	862	473	1,335
	Received Governance Training	6,013	5,274	11,287
	Grooming Training	89	90	179
	Leadership Training	509	---	509
	Life Skills Training	229	370	599
Total Number of Youth Participating in an Intervention		8,762	6,302	15,064
Total Youth Group Members		9,593	9,682	19,275

The program has also initiated a pilot activity directed specifically to adolescents in high schools – the School-Based Teen Brigades. Currently the program supports these groups in 46 schools. These brigades are formally created within the schools to develop contingency plans for how their schools should prepare for and respond to specific shocks (fire and earthquake), but they also receive a wide range of project messages, including, nutrition messages, costs of early marriage, information about climate changes, ‘eve-teasing’, governance messages, women’s empowerment.

**4. Addressing Environmental Risks.** Addressing environmental risk in the SHOUHARDO III Program has two dimensions. One of these is related to the systems that the program has put in place to monitor and mitigate the environmental risks resulting from implementation of program activities. The MTE found that these systems are working well. The program has developed an Environmental Monitoring and Mitigation Plan that is complete and comprehensive. In addition, the program has sufficient staff capacities at multiple levels for implementing the plan.

The second dimension is building capacities of program participants, both beneficiaries and intermediaries, to be able to identify and address environmental risks. This is primarily addressed in activities under Purposes 1 and 3.

## **I. Targeting**

As already mentioned, the SHOUHARDO III Program is committed to having impact on poor and extreme poor households in the Char and Haor Regions. To identify these households, the program implemented a well-being analysis at the start of the program in which staff facilitated a process with community members to identify wealth categories (for example, well-off, moderately well-off, poor and extreme poor), define wealth criteria relevant for the community (for example, livelihood activities, land holdings, livestock holdings, house type) and use the criteria to classify all households into the different wealth categories. This process was used in SHOUHARDO I and has continued to evolve into a very effective mechanism for defining the poor and extreme poor. The MTE found very few, if any, cases where participants disagreed with the wealth category to which they had been assigned. The MTE did find, however, cases in which persons who should have qualified for participation were not selected. Three main reasons explain these cases. In a few large villages, not everyone in the village was able to participate in the well-being analysis meeting and were therefore not included. In other villages, especially in the Char Region, newcomers had arrived in the village after the well-being analysis as a result of displacement from floods and erosion. The third type of household that has been excluded, to some extent is households composed of newly-weds who got married after the well-being analysis and established a separate household. In this last case, the program has tried to include many of these as members of the parent’s household. All in all, however, the SHOUHARDO III Program has done a very effective job of identifying the right households to be targeted by the program using a transparent, participatory process.

After identification of participants for the program through the well-being analysis process, selected PEP households were assigned to Core Occupational Groups (CoGs) to facilitate the formation of the subsequent groups for training and input support, primarily under Purpose 1. This was a self-selection process, i.e., PEP households were allowed to select the CoG that they desired, although the resource basket of households guided households toward specific CoGs. Those PEP households with access to land, for example, selected a field crop CoG. Those landless households with only a homestead selected the CHD CoG or the on-farm IGA CoG. Those households with existing businesses, like petty trade, found themselves guided toward the off-farm IGA CoG. For Purpose 2, selected households with pregnant or lactating women were targeted for interventions, and for Purpose 4, all selected PEP households were targeted for interventions.

“We are happy with the way people have been selected and grouped at the beginning...we wouldn't change anything for next time...we like the system, in the future, same process”

Maize FFBS FGD Participants  
in Char Gudha Bari

## J. Theory of Change

The SHOUHARDO III Program ToC is a well laid-out representation of the major purposes and key activities of the program, accompanied by a detailed narrative. SHOUHARDO III staff plan to update the ToC based on the MTE findings and the learnings to date. The MTE highlighted a few areas that should receive attention in this planned update. One observation is that the ToC should reflect the different contexts of the Char and Haor Regions and should in particular be contextualized to the Haor Region with its two distinct livelihood seasons, limited access to land, and different value chains. The presentation of some significant risks and assumptions is also understated in the graphic and the narrative. For example, a Purpose 3 assumption is that “no catastrophic disaster occurs beyond the normal intensity”. Since the program is working in disaster-prone areas, such assumptions should be revisited; and an updated document should include a more robust description of risks and assumptions. The update is also an opportunity to incorporate a greater focus on post-program sustainability, including a vision of what SHOUHARDO III groups should look like after the program ends. Links to external actors (government, private sector, NGOs) and how they will support communities post-program should also be given more detail. When updating the ToC, SHOUHARDO III may also want to identify “breakthrough” achievements, outcomes that represent a significant leap forward or an advance that is not easily reversed in a pathway of change (e.g., PEP women successfully contest for local elected offices). This would assist the program in tracking changes which ensure sustainability. The MTE notes that the revised FFP requirement for the ToC narrative requires the use of tables to capture assumptions, rationales, stakeholders and integration. This should be kept in mind in revising the ToC.

## K. Implementation Systems

I. Management & Partnership. Program Management investigations typically look at management structures, program vision and leadership, strategic and operational planning, implementation problem-solving and decision-making, and communications. All in all, the management of this large and complex Title II Program is going well. There are different management structures and styles in SHOUHARDO III, however, then in previous phases of SHOUHARDO. For example, with fewer implementing local partners, the function of Regional Coordinators has become more focused on coordinating technical support and less focused on implementation problem-solving and decision-making, a critical function when there was a large number of partners. To clarify roles and responsibilities of the various management and technical units implementing the SHOUHARDO III Program, a Program Management, Coordination and Staffing Plan was developed in March 2017.

As with any large program, there is some tension in SHOUHARDO III between line management structures and technical support structures, especially with the latter feeling as if they could have more influence on program quality if senior technical coordinators had direct supervision of implementation staff. CARE Bangladesh has extensive experience historically with different types of delivery structures;

and the current structure, while not perfect, is the most suitable for the Bangladesh context. From a practical perspective, only one position can supervise delivery of the program, i.e., line management, but technical staff responsible for quality must also have influence on delivery. One of the priority recommendations (#2 – Shifting Technical Capacities Closer to the Front-Lines) is intended to facilitate this.

There is a perception by field-based staff that the function of CARE's Hub Office staff<sup>28</sup> based in Districts where CARE does not have a Regional Coordination Office, i.e., Jamalpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Netrakona, Habigonj and Sunamganj, is to "police" the program. The function seems to be to look for problems, not only in commodity management, but also in other program implementation, and then to report directly to Dhaka when problems are observed. This function itself is useful, of course.

However, communications on the problems could be more transparent and timely with opportunities provided to field-based implementation staff to identify and address problems themselves more quickly.

The Quarterly Learning and Sharing Meetings (QLSM) are a good mechanism for providing a platform for learning, sharing and refresher training, but they are demanding to organize and not a very efficient use of staff time given travel times. Priority Recommendation #5 addresses this activity.

At a different management level for the program, it needs to be noted that there has been significant turnover within FFP at the position of Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) for the SHOUHARDO III Program. The impact of this on the program has been that time has to be spent providing orientation to new AORs as they come in, and decisions have been delayed while new AORs are brought up to speed on issues.

Relative to partnership, in this third phase of SHOUHARDO, the number of implementing partners has been reduced from 46 in SHOUHARDO I to 16 in SHOUHARDO II to the current 6 in SHOUHARDO III. The current six implementing partners have been working with CARE in the SHOUHARDO Program through SHOUHARDO I, II and now III, so basically these can be considered the best of the forty-six original partners. The relationships between CARE and these partners are strong, but both CARE and the implementing partners are taking each other for granted to some extent, i.e., not working diligently to maintain and improve the relationship, since they have been working together for so long. There has been some need to re-tool partner approaches to be consistent with the strategy of SHOUHARDO III, and the previous experience with earlier phases of SHOUHARDO has been more of a hindrance than an advantage, e.g., transitioning to a VSLA (SHOUHARDO III) from a Self-help group approach (SHOUHARDOs I and II).

The MTE observed that the relationships with the GoB at different levels are oriented mostly around keeping the GoB informed while also engaging GoB technical staff as trainers when possible. There is not much activity related to joint strategy development or joint implementation; but the GoB, in general, seems to not have much interest in NGOs, given the other demands that have been placed on them for service provision and regulation.

**2. Collaborative Learning and Action.** The SHOUHARDO III Program has a very large and complex monitoring and evaluation system, with staff at all levels of CARE and in partner NGOs. This system effectively collects and manages all information needed for timely reporting all project indicators to the donors. Effective data quality control mechanisms are built into the system. Collection of project data from the field and entering the data into the program data base is a very intensive ongoing activity. The M&E staff report that they are able to provide the necessary data in a timely manner, but the demands on their time to complete reporting on time are very great. At the time of the MTE the project was just in the process of initiating an electronic cloud-based data capture system called STREAM which

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<sup>28</sup> A Senior Officer for Technical Support and Representation (SO-TSCR) leads a team of six persons in each of the six districts where a CARE Regional Office does not exist to represent CARE with partners, coordinate technical support for partners, and monitor program activities.

when fully operational should reduce the time needed to collect and enter the monitoring data into the program's data base. The initial startup of this system is likely to encounter difficulties in transition to the electronic data capture system. The program M&E team is aware of these potential problems and is advocating to provide backup technical support to help the field staff as they adjust to entering and uploading data directly from tablets. Initially, there will be parallel paper form collection as a backup in case there are any problems encountered with the electronic data capture and upload process. During this phase the work load of field M&E staff will actually increase, but as the staff become familiarized with the system the workload should decrease.

In addition to collecting data needed for reporting to the donor, the M&E system also has the capability to undertake monitoring activities that respond more directly to project management needs. One example of this is the installation of the FLAIRb recurrent monitoring system that tracks project participants on a six-month interval to measure uptake of program-supported activities, how these lead to improvements in household resilience capacities, and ultimately how program interventions enhance household resilience to shocks. Another example is the employability survey that was implemented to collect information about preferred employment options of PEP households, as an input into developing an employment strategy.

One issue of concern to the program's M&E staff is the addition of responsibility to support program learning activities over and above their current monitoring duties. The initial design of the M&E system and associated staffing levels was based on program monitoring activities only. As mentioned above, these activities fully engage the M&E staff. Requests to have the M&E staff support learning activities will place additional burdens on the staff. While the introduction of the electronic data capture system should in the long run reduce the work load of staff related to routine program monitoring, there is concern that this change will not be sufficient to provide the necessary staffing capacity to address the support of learning activities. The M&E staff are well aware of the overall importance of learning activities and are keen to support these activities. Their concern is more around the need for additional staffing support to be able to meet these needs. Program should also envision the learning activities as part of everyone's job and not just the M&E staff. The e-M&E system STREAM could also offer documentation and aggregating the learning activities

SHOUHARDO III has developed a comprehensive knowledge management and learning strategy and system whose purpose is to capture and disseminate learning, evidence, and innovations to a wide audience that includes program staff, partners, government and other stakeholders. The emphasis on knowledge management and learning in SHOUHARDO III seeks to systematically combine M&E data and stakeholder experience to provide evidence and understanding, and to document impact and generate learning. This approach seeks to ensure that program experience is still captured, but informed by data and aligned with strategy, and professionally produced. The knowledge management function, while relatively new, has established a strategy and annual plan and generated several well-produced and user-friendly publications that are available on the program website.

The Knowledge Management, Advocacy and Learning (KMAL) team coordinates with M&E staff to draw on a variety of sources that include M&E data, Quarterly Learning and Sharing Meetings, and field reports. Information is shared through a variety of platforms, including professionally produced publications, videos, and an external website with key program documents. Beyond information dissemination, the KMAL team facilitates staff reflections on M&E data long with achievements and challenges in a structured manner in venues such as the QLSPs, with discussions built around learning concepts for the five program purposes. Input and evidence of successes is solicited from all staff, including volunteers and technical officers, though one of the challenges faced by KMAL staff is that getting input from people requires constant follow-up. Another challenge is the absorption capacity of M&E staff at all levels to support the reflection and learning aspects of KMAL. With a coordinator and

implementation systems now in place, the KMAL team is in a position to significantly scale up its activities going forward.

**3. Coordination and Collaboration.** There are very few meetings of SHOUHARDO III staff with other NGOs working in the program areas, although there are some projects and organizations who may be having similar activities. The CoPs of the three Title II Programs in Bangladesh confer regularly. However, joint learning opportunities or regular sharing of information at the technical level between the programs are not organized. As with many large, complex programs, staff are fully occupied with the functions specified in their job descriptions and activities defined on their workplans. Interaction with other projects or organizations is not a priority. HHN project staff, field facilitators and CHVs, for example, are supposed to establish a list of priority WASH-related infrastructure projects in each community in close collaboration with VDCs and Union Disaster Management Committees, but this task has not yet been completed.

**4. Financial Management Systems.** The current LoA cash budget for the SHOUHARDO III Program is projected at US\$ 71,824,603, including US\$ 37,387,371 in monetization proceeds, US\$ 21,624,942 in 202e funding, US\$ 5,104,800 for Inland Transport Storage and Handling (ITSH) of distributed commodities, and a GoB contribution of US\$ 7,707,490. The total Commodity & Freight (C&F) value of monetized and distributed commodities is estimated at US\$ 49,885,952 making the total cost of the SHOUHARDO III Program to FFP to be US\$ 76,615,694 (C&F value of food plus 202e plus ITSH).

The estimated amount of monetization proceeds cited above is fairly accurate since the price for monetization transactions are fixed by the Host Country Agreement with the GoB who are the buyers of the monetized wheat. The fixed rate is between 82% and 83% of the C&F value of the wheat, which is normally quite acceptable compared to past experience worldwide with Title II monetization. The costs of monetization, including the lost C&F value (projected to be around US\$7.5 million) and the staff resources used to manage monetization processes, are still substantial. While it would not be simple to re-allocate resources budgeted by the US government for monetization, from the program's perspective, greater impact could be generated if equivalent cash resources were made available in place of the monetization.

Annex C contains a summary table of financial resources showing a burn rate through December 2017 of 35.2%. The targeted burn rate for this point in the project life is 45%, so the program is currently underspending.

Although there were significant cash flow challenges at the beginning of the program due to the delay in receiving the first monetization proceeds, these have been addressed; and the MTE found that program implementation is not currently being constrained by cash flow.

**5. Commodity Management Systems.** Commodity resources comprise distribution and monetization of a total of 138,350 metric tons of Title II commodities over the life of the SHOUHARDO III Program. Commodities for distribution include wheat, vegetable oil and yellow split peas for pregnant and lactating women and children and their families under Purpose 2, representing 178,000 PEP households over LoA. Wheat is the only monetization commodity, and it is sold to the GoB. As of December 2017, CARE had distributed 4,111 MT, including 4,006 MT to 40,000 Purpose 2 recipients and 105 MT to 18,000 households under an emergency response distribution for Rohingya refugees from Myanmar in Cox's Bazar. In the same period, the program monetized 77,210 MT that generated an estimated \$21 million in equivalent local currency.

CARE continues to build on the successful commodity management practices established since the first phase of SHOUHARDO in 2004. The loss of commodities, 87.19 metric tons or 1.14% of total call forward commodities for distribution and monetization, which is within normal range for Title III programs. The loss occurred during ocean shipment and inland transport. Statistics on commodities received for distribution and monetization for the program are presented in tables provided in Annex C.

CARE follows the principle of proper management of the commodity supply chain to ensure that high quality food reaches the right recipients at the right time. CARE and PNGOs manage and monitor the direct distribution of commodities through a network of 8 warehouses and 200 final distribution points. The distribution of commodities involves a range of critical steps in the supply chain management process as part of standard operating procedures outlined in a Commodity Management and Accounting Manual. Commodities received at the Port of Chittagong are transferred by the CARE-appointed transport and logistics agency to each of the 8 warehouses located in the program's operating districts. The final distribution points located at the union level receive commodities from the district warehouses for distribution to the target PEP households. A total of 136 staff, including 95 full-time implementing staff and 41 casual workers, are engaged in commodity management from port clearance, through transport, distribution, monitoring, and reporting. A list of the staff positions is provided in Annex C.

**6. Human Resource Management Systems.** There are four layers of staff in SHOUHARDO III. The first layer are CARE staff based in Dhaka who are managers or coordinators (CoP, Senior Management Team, and Senior Technical Coordinators). The second layer are also CARE staff (Regional Coordinators and Technical Managers) based in the field in the two regional offices in Sirajganj and Kishoreganj. The third layer are partner NGO management and supervisory staff, including Executive Directors and Focal Points as well as managers and technical staff based in the districts (Program Managers, Technical Officers, Field Supervisors, and Union-based Field Facilitators). The fourth layer are the front-line delivery staff who are community-based volunteers (CAVs, VHVs and CEVs).

CARE has 110 staff in SHOUHARDO III, many of whom are highly experienced and who worked in SHOUHARDO I and II. The stability in program staff facilitated a faster start-up of the new program, although start-up was constrained by the delay in receiving monetization proceeds from the GoB. It also challenges long-term staff to view SHOUHARDO III through a new lens that takes the program's evolution into account, rather than continuing to implement activities in the same manner as previous iterations. In 2017, the program rationalized job descriptions which overlapped and combined them with results-based expectations to achieve greater accountability. SHOUHARDO III management feels that the program has the right level of staff, with some remaining need to clarify some roles to bring them into alignment with the current program. The program has strong technical capacity and is focused on building greater capacity in other critical areas, particularly management skills. With the new design there is also need for CARE to recruit technical expertise around youth, working with the private sector, and water and sanitation. These are human resources gaps that the program needs to fill. The gender balance in CARE SHOUHARDO III staff is 65% male and 35% female staff. The program makes a good effort to accommodate the needs and security concerns of female employees, though recruiting women for field positions remains a challenge.

SHOUHARDO III's six implementing NGO partners have a high level of responsibility and accountability, in keeping with CARE's role as a facilitating organization. The main human resource challenge faced by partners is staff turnover of 30% or more, largely due to non-competitive pay structures and high workloads in SHOUHARDO III. While the issue of salaries must be addressed by the partners internally, the high turnover is a challenge to the continuity of technical support and the quality of implementation. Volunteer dropouts are also high, up to 50% in some areas. New volunteers need to be trained, but technical officers report that, given other program responsibilities, they do not have time to fully train them, which in turn reduces the quality of the training received by program participants. Partner program staff are generally 75% men and 25% women, while the community-level volunteers are predominantly women. Critical human resource issues related to program structure are addressed with priority Recommendations #4 (Reducing Volunteer Workload) and #14 (Staff Structure).

**7. Materials & Equipment Management Systems.** The CARE Bangladesh main office in Dhaka procures large assets such as motorcycles, desktop computers, and vehicles for use by the PNGOs. CARE

follows standard procurement practices for ensuring that items are required for the program and included in the program's budget. Competitive bidding processes are used to ensure that costs are reasonable. Items approved for purchase by the PNGOs include laptops, office furniture and fixtures, bicycles, training materials, and office supplies. PNGOs follow the procurement terms and conditions stipulated in their sub-agreements with CARE for SHOUHARDO III.

The MTE observed no major issues relative to procurement of materials and equipment by CARE and PNGOs. There were no significant delays in implementation as a result of delayed procurement. PNGOs at the local level are suffering from lack of vendors due to mandatory requirement of VAT registration. This is more frequent in the remote chars and deep haors.

#### **IV. MAJOR THEMES FOR THE REMAINING LIFE OF SHOUHARDO III**

The SHOUHARDO III MTE has identified a short-list of high priority recommendations for the remaining life of the program. A number of themes emerged from this prioritization process, and the program is encouraged to focus not only on the priority commendations described below but also on any other actions that can be taken in support of the themes. The sixteen priority recommendations have been organized into four themes. The major observations supporting each recommendation are provided along with suggestions from the MTE on ways to operationalize each recommendation.

##### **A. THEME A: Ensuring Program Quality**

The SHOUHARDO III Program has undertaken a very wide range of activities, with a significant scaling up of activities in the current program year. Program implementing staff are feeling a bit overwhelmed at the volume of work that is planned; and there is a real risk that, in order to reach the target numbers, the quality of the work may decline. In the remaining two years, the focus should be on ensuring that the capacity building that is being done continues to meet high standards, so that the behavioral change outcomes that result are firmly entrenched. That will mean *focusing on fewer types of activities* likely to have greater impact on food security and *intensifying the interaction* with participants.

I. Recommendation #1: Deep Haor Livelihoods Strategy. The two contexts in which the SHOUHARDO III Program is working, i.e., the middle and northern Chars Region and the Haor Region, have common features in that regular annual disasters are normal, not an exception; populations are relatively mobile with at least some members of PEP households usually migrating seasonally to find work; markets are difficult to access in the monsoon season, especially in more remote parts of each region; and the percentage of female-headed households is slightly higher than in the rest of Bangladesh<sup>29</sup>.

Each region also has its unique features. In the Char region, for example, disasters are mainly due to floods and river erosion; whole households may move when erosion has destroyed a homestead; homesteads in the remote chars and in communities on rivers without embankments can always be at risk of erosion; there is significant "squatting" on river embankments; maize, chili and sweet gourd are already being produced at significant scale; attached chars look similar to other parts of Bangladesh (high population density, fragmented land, markets functional, and basic services present) but in the remote detached chars – land is more available but basic services are almost totally absent; and transport costs in the monsoon season are high.

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<sup>29</sup> The 2014 Demographic and Health Survey estimated the number of female-headed households nationally at 12.5% while the SHOUHARDO III census of PEP households estimated female-headed households at 24.8% in the Char Districts and 22.6% in the Haor Districts. Estimates on the number of de facto female-headed households (households normally headed by a male who has migrated to find work) are unavailable, but these are certainly higher than normal in the Haor Region, where migration is a common livelihoods strategy in the monsoon season.

In the haor context, on the other hand, disasters are due to flash floods, waves and wind; the *atis*<sup>30</sup> where people live are relatively stable although there is some erosion; PEP households are highly dependent on daily wage labor both local and migrant; most crop land is in rice in the winter season: there is no summer cropping season; and maize, chili and sweet gourd are relatively new crops in the region. Villages on the margin of the haor look like the attached chars, but in villages in the deep haor, life is very difficult in the summer/monsoon when people are concentrated on an *ati*, transportation is costly, and there is substantial migration.

In the haor, there are two very distinct seasons. In the winter, when the water in the haor has receded, farming becomes a major activity with rice the predominant crop. The livelihoods of most PEP households are oriented around sharecropping on rice, farm daily wage labor, earth moving daily wage labor as wealthier households invest in restoring eroded *atis*, and other types of income generating activities, including transport services ferrying people across the remaining waterbodies or across the sandy haor bed. Homestead production is expanded to areas on the edge of the *ati*, and livestock production, especially goats and ducks, is expanded.

Life changes dramatically, however, when the haor refills in the monsoon season, especially in the deep haor for people living on *atis* totally surrounded by water. There is no farming since the land is inundated. Homestead production is scaled back to very limited production around the houses on the *ati*. Almost every PEP household has sent household members elsewhere, for example, to larger towns, Dhaka, and Chittagong, to find work as daily wage laborers. Men and boys who are remaining on the *ati* become engaged in capture fisheries. Life is generally very difficult in the monsoon season.

The approaches used in SHOUHARDO III under Purpose I are primarily oriented around farming. These are delivered through FFBSs that are focused on field crops, on-farm IGAs and culture fisheries. These approaches are high relevant for the attached chars and the marginal haor communities, since these areas appear much like the rest of Bangladesh in terms of farming being the major sources of livelihoods for PEP households either directly or indirectly. The approaches are also relevant for the remote chars since land is more readily available, generally, but especially in the winter season. SHOUHARDO III's Purpose I interventions are not very relevant, however, for the deep haor context where people are highly dependent on non-farm livelihoods activities, including migration for labor opportunities and capture fishing. In many respects, people living in the deep haor, are the most vulnerable PEP households with which SHOUHARDO III works, yet the interventions under purpose I are least appropriate for them. The MTE recommends therefore that the program develop a livelihoods strategy that is tailored to the deep haor context. By promoting livelihoods opportunities that are appropriate in the deep haor context, the program will help to increase the limited resilience capacities of PEP households in this project area

**RECOMMENDATION #1**  
**DEEP HAOR LIVELIHOODS STRATEGY**  
*DEVELOP A LIVELIHOODS STRATEGY FOR THE DEEP HAOR, ESPECIALLY FOR THE  
 LEAN PERIOD IN THE SUMMER.*

The process that can be used to develop this strategy parallels a Theory of Change process. It begins with identifying clearly the impact group(s) in the deep haor upon which the program wants to have impact. PEP households can take many forms, ranging from households dependent on sharecropping in

<sup>30</sup> An *ati* is like a large mound or pedestal of raised ground upon which people live. It is completely surrounded by water when the haor is full.

the winter/fishing in the summer to households that are dependent on different types of daily wage labor, including migrant day labor, year-round, or households that have limited labor capacities and are dependent on other households. The pathways for change and the interventions to induce movement on the pathway will be different for each of these different impact groups.

The question has been raised by FFP as to whether there is sufficient time to develop a livelihoods strategy in the final two years of the program. It should not be a question of whether or not to do a livelihoods strategy since the program at the moment is having very little impact on livelihoods in the deep haor. The MTE expects that the SHOUHARDO III Program will be roundly criticized at the time of the final evaluation if the program continues on the current course. Livelihoods strategies can be very simple or very complex. There is certainly enough time remaining in the program to develop and implement a simple livelihoods strategy for the deep haor that will produce more impact than is currently being produced.

2. Recommendation #2: Shifting Technical Capacity. At the beginning of a program, it is critical to have the technical knowledge in a program centralized, close to the Chief-of-Party who is responsible for the overall vision for the program. This facilitates the development of the practical approaches and implementation strategies that are consistent with the overall vision for the program. It also facilitates the development of integrated approaches across purposes. Once these strategies and implementation plans are developed, however, it is important for the implementation structures to have sufficient technical support to understand and implement the strategies. Technical problems will arise as the strategies are implemented that will require support from senior technical managers. Strategies will also need to be adapted based on implementation experience. There will also be very localized opportunities for further enhancing strategies, and senior technical managers should be available first hand to analyze these opportunities and develop effective ways to capitalize on them.

The SHOUHARDO III management team has encouraged senior technical staff to visit the field as often as possible, and this is working reasonably well. The problem for SHOUHARDO III is more structural. Under Purpose I, for example, there are two Senior Technical Coordinators (STCs) based in Dhaka who are responsible for strategic and operational planning for Purpose I. One of these is focused on Agriculture and Livelihoods, and the other is focused on Private Sector Engagement. These two positions are responsible for training and technical support for CARE's regional Technical Managers (TMs) and the six Technical Officers (TOs), one for each partner. For Purpose I, CARE has two regional TMs, one for Agriculture and Livelihoods based in Kishoreganj and one for Private Sector Engagement based in Sirajganj. The function of these positions is to provide technical support to the partner TOs. Each partner has one TO for all of Purpose I. This position is responsible for training of technical support to the front-line delivery staff for Purpose I which are Community Agriculture Volunteers (CAVs), and this is where the technical support structure needs to be strengthened. There are a total of 947 CAVs working in SHOUHARDO III which means that each of the six TOs (one for each partner) is responsible, on average, to provide technical support to 157 CAVs. In order to ensure high quality program intervention, SHOUHARDO III needs to find ways to strengthen the technical support capacity in the program to support the front-lines.

**RECOMMENDATION #2**  
**SHIFT TECHNICAL CAPACITY CLOSER TO THE FRONT-LINES**  
*SHIFT MORE OF THE TECHNICAL CAPACITIES CLOSER TO THE FRONT-LINES TO MONITOR  
 TRAINING AND BUILD CAPACITIES WHERE NEEDED.*

Shifting technical capacities could mean moving some central-based staff positions closer to the front-lines or it could mean shifting human resource investments, i.e., eliminating some positions at the central level, either technical or other types of positions and creating more technical support positions, probably with partners to be able to provide technical support to volunteers. Note that the example given is for Purpose I. The recommendation applies to the program as a whole, however. This recommendation should be considered in conjunction with other priority recommendations including the next two recommendations on shifting technical capacities under Purpose I and reducing volunteer workload as well as recommendation #11 on youth employment.

3. Recommendation #3: Shifting Technical Capacities in Purpose I. The SHOUHARDO III strategy for Purpose I focuses on four pathways for achieving increased income and access to food objectives by PEP households. These four pathways include a farm pathway, an off-farm pathway, a youth employment pathway, and an access to capital pathway. The program's interventions related to the farm pathway include the FFBSs for field crops, comprehensive homestead development, and on-farm IGAs, as well as the culture fisheries interventions. The off-farm pathway includes interventions in SHOUHARDO III related to the off-farm IGA groups and capture fisheries interventions. The youth employment interventions encompass vocational and life skills training for youth, and the access to capital pathway interventions are focused on VSLAs. As mentioned in Section III on program progress, SHOUHARDO III is generating fairly nice impact on the farm pathway, and a little bit of impact is being generated on the off-farm IGA pathway. Fisheries interventions, both culture and capture, have only recently gotten underway, so there is limited impact being generated so far. The youth employability interventions and the VSLA interventions are both having minimal impact at the moment. One important strategy for strengthening the resilience of households is to promote a range of livelihood alternatives that provide households with opportunities to diversify their exposure to different types of risks. The four pathways supported by program provide these diverse livelihood opportunities, but the current emphasis on the farm pathway restricts the opportunities for households to take advantage of the other pathways as a means to enhance their resilience. This is a particular limitation for households that do not have access to land resources and cannot engage in the farm pathway.

So, why is the greatest impact being generated on the farm pathway in SHOUHARDO III? A look at the technical capacities supporting implementation provides some explanation. Nearly all of the technical capacities in the program are oriented around farming. The STCs, TMs and TOs are almost all specialized in agriculture or agricultural marketing. Agriculture is certainly important for households living in the Char and Haor Regions, but SHOUHARDO III's household census of PEP households estimated that only around 24% of PEP households in the Char Region have access to crop land, and 22% have access in the Haor Region. Certainly, these households will benefit from the agricultural technical expertise in the program, and those landless PEP households who are sharecropping will also benefit. The other PEP households are dependent on other types of livelihoods, however, stressing the importance of the other pathways. The SHOUHARDO III Program needs to give more attention to the off-farm pathway, youth employment pathway, and access to capital pathway by allocating more technical expertise and resources to support interventions in these areas. Strengthening these non-farm pathways will provide opportunities for all PEP households to enhance their resilience capacities.

**RECOMMENDATION #3**  
**SHIFT TECHNICAL CAPACITIES IN PURPOSE 1**  
*SHIFT TECHNICAL CAPACITIES UNDER PIURPOSE 1 MORE TOWARD OFF-FARM IGAS,  
 YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND VSLA.*

SHOUHARDO III needs to have more expertise resident in the program to support planning and implementation for off-farm IGA development, youth employment and VSLAs. This could mean having STCs assigned to these other areas, but more important, especially in light of Recommendation #2, it likely means having more technical capacity in these thematic areas at the implementing partner level.

4. Recommendation #4: Reduce Volunteer Workload. SHOUHARDO III's community-level volunteers for agriculture, health and nutrition, and women's empowerment carry the main responsibility for transmitting program learnings to participants. The workload for each type of volunteer is high. For example, in Sirajganj, the PNGO implementing there covers 36,360 PEP households with 366 volunteers (145 CAVs, 145 CHVs, 76 CEVs). This is a ratio of approximately one volunteer to 100 households. Every month, a single volunteer provides multiple types of technical training sessions, and will help distribute inputs, conduct household visits and courtyard sessions, facilitate special events such as community clinics or livestock immunizations, help organize specialized off-site trainings, coordinate with other volunteers and join their sessions, confer with field supervisors, and attend meetings. In addition, the integrated nature of SHOUHARDO III's technical training, while a strength of the program, also requires a higher level of competency from volunteers.

Under Purpose 4, for example, CEVs cover twenty-eight topics and conduct seven distinct training sessions for six groups in two villages each month (two EKATA group sessions, one session each for adolescent girls, couples, youth, a men's group, and a mixed group session) – a total of fourteen training sessions over twenty-two working days – plus household visits, linking with service providers, other volunteers, and the VDC, and preparing reports. While the program estimates a required labor input of five hours a day, CEVs, for example, may work seven to eight hours day. CAVs and CHVs have similar workloads. Much is expected of volunteers, and their remuneration is low in relation to their level of responsibility. The average daily wage for a volunteer is BDT 95, whereas a daily wage laborer in the farm or construction sectors earns between BDT 300 to 400 per full work day. The dropout rate among volunteers since the program began in 2016 is high at 30%. The MTE is not recommending increasing the remuneration of volunteers, at this point. The program should focus first on making the workload more manageable, so that volunteers do not need to spend so much time on program activities and the current remuneration is more equitable for the time spent.

The volunteers are responsible not only for technical training but also for introducing new concepts to participants and facilitating the understanding needed to bring about long-term behavior change. However, the MTE observed that the volunteers' ability to transmit new concepts and techniques is hampered in part by the volume of activities for which they are responsible, the complexity of some of the modules that guide the volunteers in their training, and the type of training materials used directly with participants.

SHOUHARDO III's training modules are comprehensive and the resource materials provided to volunteers are good. However, the guidelines that volunteers are expected to use are possibly too sophisticated for the education levels of most volunteers. Some concepts, for example, in women's empowerment, are new to participants and difficult to understand. For example, CEVs may be required to hold several sessions on one topic to enable participants to grasp the key ideas, and some stated that they find some of the topics that they are supposed to train on difficult to comprehend. In FFBSs, the

MTE found that the evidence on adoption suggests that the new ideas and technologies being adopted are, for the most part, the simplest that are being promoted. Some CHVs were observed to be giving one-way messages instead of counseling mothers and failing to identify growth failure. Volunteers have some participatory training materials to use in their sessions, but these are limited and there are few visual aids. CEVs noted that while their own guidelines have some pictures and figures, these are not at a level that can be shared with program participants. Overall, a limited understanding by volunteers and program participants weakens the application of good practices and, in the case of health and nutrition and women's empowerment, the ability to persuade other family members to adopt positive behavior changes.

Partner staff expressed frustration that the program has not attracted volunteers with the desired education level and that this affects the quality of the training by volunteers. Given the low remuneration levels for volunteers and the possibly lower quality of education available in rural areas, the program should make adjustments to accommodate the skill levels of the volunteers it currently has and to ensure that they are better capacitated to carry out their responsibilities. One way in which the effectiveness of training can be improved is by refining some of the program messages and revising the training materials. Recommendation #15 focuses on refresher training for front-line staff.

SHOUHARDO III should reduce the workload of volunteers by focusing on fewer types of activities. This will require staff, volunteers and participants to identify those activities that are assessed to have the greatest impact and intensifying the training and interaction with participants around those prioritized activities. When asked which modules could be truncated or dropped, staff were reluctant to suggest eliminating any. However, focus group participants could readily say which types of training they found to be most useful. A focus on fewer activities with high impact should be complemented by a revision of the training modules to simplify them. Some of the more experienced CEVs stated that some basic exercises are understood the first time around by participants and do not need to be repeated as currently required, which would help reduce volunteer workload. In addition, since the majority of program participants have limited education and are adult learners, more participatory training materials should be introduced. Greater use of pictorial training materials will also enable participants to place themselves as actors inside the lesson that is being transmitted. The combination of prioritized activities and more focused, simplified training materials will help staff deepen capacity so that the practices and behavioral change outcomes that support sustainability are firmly entrenched.

Finally, some of the volunteers' responsibilities entail a high volume of paperwork. For example, the program inputs distributed by CAVs require filling out multiple forms, which is time-consuming and inefficient. The reporting requirements should be reviewed with the aim of maximizing the efficiency of the system and reducing demands on volunteer time.

#### **RECOMMENDATION #4**

### **REDUCE VOLUNTEER WORKLOAD**

*FIND WAYS TO REDUCE THE WORKLOAD AND INCREASE THE IMPACT OF VOLUNTEERS, I.E., CAVS, CHVS AND CEVS.*

- *REVISE THE MODULES TO SIMPLIFY THEM, IDENTIFY MESSAGES THAT ARE HAVING THE GREATEST IMPACT AND FOCUS ON THESE.*
- *MAKE TRAINING MATERIALS MORE PARTICIPATORY AND ADD MORE PICTORIAL TRAINING MATERIALS.*
- *REQUIRE LESS FORM-FILLING BY ELIMINATING SOME FORMS AND USING SIMPLER FORMS.*

Since comprehensive training materials already exist in the program, narrowing down and simplifying the key messages for volunteers can be done using the existing materials. The introduction of more participatory training methods need not be costly, as many participatory methods require few materials. Once the critical messages are identified, volunteers can be trained in participatory methods to reinforce these messages with participants. The development of more pictorial training materials is likely to entail additional costs to the program, though there are many pictorial training materials used by other organizations that work in development practice that can possibly be shared and adopted by the program at lower cost than developing new materials.

The program has already recognized many of the problems facing the front-line volunteers and just recently started implementing a pilot activity in which front-line volunteers are being replaced by an expanded team of field facilitators, who are program staff. The program needs to critically evaluate the costs and benefits of this pilot in delivering program interventions, ensuring program quality, and building local capacities, before deciding to scale the approach up.

5. Recommendation #5: Quarterly Learning and Sharing Meetings. The QLSDMs in SHOUHARDO III are a valuable mechanism for partner TOs, Field Facilitators, and volunteers to meet on a range of issues. QLSDMs may also be attended by TMs and STCs. The focus of the meetings is on capacity building, and they are also used to monitor progress, discuss achievements, identify challenges and find solutions, talk about strategy to implement field activities, introduce new technical approaches, disseminate new ideas, clarify training guidelines, conduct “dummy sessions” to strengthen training techniques, address administrative issues and logistics, and to meet individually so that technical staff can give guidance and feedback to volunteers. SHOUHARDO III’s knowledge management team uses the QLSDMs to capture learnings from staff for sharing and dissemination and has developed a format for identifying successes and challenges that can be used for broader program learning. QLSDM meetings are also a useful process for reviewing whether specific interventions are working as intended. When it was discovered through QLSDM discussions that the Farmer Leader concept was not working well, it was suspended.

The QLSDMs are currently held for two days every three months at a union-level venue. The venues near program communities give partner TOs an opportunity to visit SHOUHARDO III villages and to observe volunteers in action in their communities. Since QLSDMs meetings are non-residential they require some volunteers to travel long distances each day to reach the union. The travel distance means that volunteers from remote locations arrive at the venue around 11 am and must leave again by 3 pm in order to reach home before dark. With an hour set aside for lunch, the truncated schedule means that partner staff and volunteers are able to meet for only six hours over the course of two days. With many competing priorities on the schedule, the lack of time reduces the TOs’ abilities to use the meeting effectively. Several staff stated that they needed a full day or two days to adequately cover all the issues relating to only one Purpose, but instead must cover their topics in a few hours. Many volunteers need intensive coaching, especially given the high turnover rate, and the short meeting time does not allow TOs to conduct in-depth individual meetings with thirty or more volunteers. In addition, when one TO is too busy to attend the QLSDMs due to seasonal demands or other circumstances, the other TOs must conduct technical sessions in subjects with which they are not familiar. Finally, holding the meetings every three months requires a great deal of time on the TOs’ part to schedule, organize and conduct the meetings, so much so that TOs in some districts reported that the QLSDM was consuming nearly all of their time, at the expense of their other technical responsibilities for field monitoring and technical support.

Overall, TOs, field facilitators, and volunteers find the QLSDMs useful, but as currently configured the meetings are seen as neither fulfilling their purpose nor the expectations of the volunteers. Many of these challenges can be addressed by organizing residential meetings for longer periods of time at less frequent intervals. Longer, residential meetings will allow enough time for all the topics to be

adequately covered, will reduce the anxiety of volunteers about travel back home that may distract their attention from the meetings, and enable TOs to give adequate attention to individual volunteers. Reducing the time burden of arranging quarterly meetings, will also create more space for TOs to visit program communities to observe volunteers and provide mentoring and monitoring.

**RECOMMENDATION #5**  
**QUARTERLY LEARNING AND SHARING MEETINGS**  
*CHANGE THE FORMAT OF THE QLSM TO BE RESIDENTIAL AND ORGANIZED  
 AT SIX-MONTH INTERVALS.*

Since program areas vary in the suitability and availability of meeting venues, some flexibility may be required in selecting the best local venues to hold learning and sharing meetings. Holding the learning and sharing meetings at less frequent intervals is also expected to create savings that can be directed to other program activities.

**6. Recommendation #6: VSLA Strategy.** The Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) approach is something that CARE is famous for around the world, but the SHOUHARDO III VSLAs, as they appear now, are not very well aligned with the standard approach that CARE uses. FFP also has minimum standards for VSLAs which are highly consistent with the standard approach used by CARE. Some of the most significant differences between the CARE Approach/FFP Minimum Standards and the approach used by SHOUHARDO III are:

*Group size* – Standard practice is to have membership between 10 and 25, while the SHOUHARDO III groups are much larger. Membership in those VSLAs interviewed during the MTE ranged from 24 to 51 members.

*Group composition* – The standard practice is to form VSLA groups with people who know and trust each other before the group has been formed. In SHOUHARDO III, VSLA groups have been formed from representatives of households who have expressed an interest in participating in a savings group. These members generally come from different *paras* or *atis*, and many members did not know each other well before the group was formed. As a result, there are trust issues in the VLSA's formed by SHOUHARDO III.

*Share price* - The standard practice is for a share price to be comparable to the capacity of the poorest member in the group to be able to purchase one share. In SHOUHARDO III, most groups have been allowed full freedom to decide the share price, and some have made poor, uninformed decisions. The MTE interviewed one VSLA, for example, that had set its share price at BDT 100 (\$1.25), and, as a result, no shares have been purchased by anyone in the last two months.

*Active loan fund* – One of the benefits of the VSLA is the interest income on loans that is allocated among members during the share-out. For this benefit to accrue, loan funds must be active. The MTE found a few VSLAs in the SHOUHARDO III Program that were actively<sup>31</sup> disbursing loans, but most loan funds were fairly dormant. One VLSA that was interviewed said that they had not disbursed any loans yet, although they had accrued significant capital because “no one has had an emergency yet”. This group had made an uninformed decision to use its loan fund only for member emergencies.

<sup>31</sup> Mainly in Kurigram District.

*Meeting frequency* – The standard practice is for new VSLA groups to meet weekly during the first year of operation to build trust and firmly establish meeting protocols. The SHOUHARDO III VSLAs mostly meet on a monthly basis, although a few meet bi-weekly. Because of the way the groups have been formed, however, with membership from different *paras* or *atis*, it is difficult and somewhat costly to organize weekly meetings, especially in the monsoon season in the remote areas.

*Pass books and central register* – The standard practice is for every VSLA member to have a passbook documenting share purchases and loan activity. Every VSLA group should also have central register which at a minimum documents member share purchases, loan disbursements, loan repayments, and interest income from a bank account. The SHOUHARDO III members all have nicely printed passbooks. The central registers, however, are generally not very well-kept and usually not managed by a VSLA member, but rather by the CAV or field facilitator. At the beginning of a VSLA intervention, substantial coaching and mentoring of secretaries or whoever is designated to keep the VSLA books is required, and the VSLAs in SHOUHARDO III are still relatively early in the process of becoming established. More dependence than necessary at this stage, however, was observed with VSLA officers not able to explain the ledgers clearly and depending on project staff to complete the ledgers.

Some of the features of the SHOUHARDO III VSLA intervention are consistent with CARE best practice. VSLA members could purchase a variable number of shares, between 1 to 5, depending on their cash available, and the interest rate on loans, generally at 10% was at an acceptable level<sup>32</sup>. None of the VSLAs interviewed by the MTE had instituted a social fund, which is an optional best practice in the FFP minimum standards. A few VSLAs interviewed during the MTE, however, reported that the purpose of the VSLA was to support members during an emergency, which is contrary to VSLA best practice.

Access to savings is an important dimension of household resilience capacities. Households are able to utilize savings to meet basic needs in times of stress and are able to utilize savings to make necessary investments to engage in diverse and less risky livelihoods. Empirical evidence from around the world strongly supports the link between savings and household resilience. Therefore, strengthening support to VSLAs will be an important way that the program can enhance household resilience.

### **RECOMMENDATION #6 VSLA STRATEGY**

**REVISE THE STRATEGY FOR VSLAS TO CONFORM MORE WITH BEST PRACTICE  
AND FFP MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR VSLAS.**

To operationalize this recommendation, the SHOUHARDO III Program should invite a specialized VSLA consultant to visit the program and spend enough time to be able to revise the SHOUHARDO III strategy for VSLAs. Whoever comes should have experience implementing or at least observing a successful VSLA intervention. Given the time remaining in the life of the program, this activity should be implemented as soon as possible. As described in the next recommendation, the SHOUHARDO III Program has the potential to have substantial impact in the Bangladesh context with a VSLA intervention, if it can be implemented following best practice guidelines and FFP minimum standards.

**7. Recommendation #7: New VSLAs.** The biggest problem worldwide with getting VSLAs established is members having cash to purchase shares. That is not a constraint for the SHOUHARDO III Program

<sup>32</sup> The FFP Minimum Standards suggest that the interest rate, or service charge, on loans from the VSLA loan fund should be somewhere between 5% and 20%.

at this stage in its life. The cash transfer input support that is being provided by the program along with the technical training and business planning training is enabling many participating households to generate a regular flow of cash income. On-Farm IGA groups in the Haor Region who have invested their cash transfers in ducks are now generating regular cash flow from the sales of duck eggs. Off-Farm IGA group members who have expanded their petty trade are now having increased sales income. FFBSs who are benefitting from the technical training, input support and marketing training are also having increased income. More important, for some of these groups located in the remote char or deep haor, there are no banks or NGO savings programs where they can keep their cash savings. This represents a huge opportunity for a community-managed savings intervention like the VSLA. Members will not only benefit from being able to place savings in a secure location, but they will benefit even more from the loans and share-outs provided by the VSLAs. Finally, youth participating in vocational training activities are not receiving the cash transfer input support from the program. In order for them to be able to acquire capital to be able to purchase the equipment, such as a sewing machine, needed to be able to apply the training, they need to be linked to a VSLA.

Experience has suggested that for a VSLA to become self-sustainable, it should have completed at least two cycles. By the time the 2<sup>nd</sup> share-out is conducted, members are usually convinced of the benefits and familiar enough with the system to be able to continue the VSLA, if the intervention has been implemented with adequate capacity building and the VSLA has not become dependent on the program. In the remaining life of the SHOUHARDO III Program, however, there is barely enough time to implement two one-year cycles.

#### **RECOMMENDATION #7**

##### **NEW VSLAS**

*FORM NEW VSLAS WITH FFBS'S AND GROUPS THAT ARE GENERATING REGULAR CASH FLOW, E.G., MAIZE FFBS'S IN THE CHAR REGION, DUCK IGA'S IN THE HAOR REGION, IGA GROUPS, ETC.*

While a one-year cycle is ideal, it is not the only way to build enough capacity to enable a VSLA to be self-sustaining. A nine-month cycle is sufficient, particularly if the share-out can be planned for when group members are in most critical need of cash and the VSLAs have been implemented with good cash management and active loan funds. If group members received their share-out and it includes significant interest income at a time when cash is most critical for the household, they will likely be highly motivated to continue into a second cycle with the VSLA and beyond.

**8. Recommendation #8: Growth Monitoring and Promotion.** In interactions during the MTE with mothers who attended the GMP sessions, it was obvious that they valued and appreciated the opportunity to have their child's weight measured and to hear whether they were growing well or not. Since a number of mothers arrived at the GMP sites at around the same time, with crying or sleepy babies, the measurements (mostly only weight<sup>33</sup>) were taken and plotted hurriedly on the growth cards. Mothers were not praised if their babies were gaining weight. Even if the child showed growth faltering, mothers were only asked whether they knew what the different colored tracks meant, showed which track the baby was on, and given the same generic standardized messages as the other mothers, for example, "feed your child more food more frequently", without specifying what foods should be fed. There was no effort made by the CHV to understand why the child was not gaining weight or had lost weight, what he or she was being fed, and what additional feeding measures the mother should take. For one observed case during the MTE, the plotted weight measurements were recorded incorrectly; and although the child looked apathetic and undernourished, the CHV did not take the mid-upper-arm circumference (MUAC) that day and the register showed that she had not done this in any of the previous sessions for any attendee. When the accompanying NGO staff checked the weight and the MUAC, the child was seen to be severely malnourished, and the TO then instructed the CHV to immediately refer the child to the nearest community clinic. Later the field facilitator was asked to comment on the recordings in the register, but he failed to notice that she had not been taking MUAC measurements for several sessions or that the weights varied widely for most children. At another site, the growth cards of six out of eight children showed that they were mildly malnourished, but the process was the same - with no attempts for identification of dietary inadequacies and no specific counseling or referral provided. To ensure program quality, more attention needs to be made to improving the quality of GMP services supported by the program.

#### **RECOMMENDATION #8**

#### **GROWTH MONITORING AND PROMOTION**

*IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF GROWTH MONITORING AND PROMOTION SERVICES BY:*

- *REINFORCING WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTING CHILD MALNUTRITION AND TAKING ANTHROPOMETRIC MEASUREMENTS CAREFULLY, AND*
- *PROVIDING COUNSELING AND MAKING REFERRALS WHEN GROWTH FALTERING IS OBSERVED.*

The front-line field staff and supervisors need to be informed as to why these growth measurements should be taken and recorded carefully, which is to promote healthy growth and to prevent child malnutrition. If a child's weight is not improving or has decreased, the CHV must spend some time to understand why this is happening - either at the GMP session itself, or to note the mother's identification and do this at a household visit as soon as possible, where feeding should be ideally observed. She should then make an appropriate referral, either herself or through her supervisor, to the nearest community clinic, upazila health complex, or NGO child nutrition center. To reduce waiting times for mothers/children and enable a less crowded environment during GMP sessions, mothers with children in different age groups can be given different time slots for attending GMP sessions.

<sup>33</sup> The program has adopted the WHO standards and measurement techniques which are followed by the GoB. The program, however, is measuring only the child's weight whereas the GoB recommends taking both weight and height. Program staff reported during the MTE that height/length measurements are relatively difficult for a CHV to measure in GMP settings, so they are not included.

While the field staff should continue the good job of encouraging the mothers of infants and young children to attend the GMP sessions and share nutrition messages, they must also be informed that at the end-line evaluation, the weights and lengths/heights of the children will be measured to estimate the reduction of stunting which is one of the major indicators for program success. The GoB would also appreciate active outreach by service providers to ensure better utilization of the community clinics.

**9. Recommendation #9: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.** While the field staff promote hand washing with soap and water at critical times, the practice itself is not being adopted. If hands are washed, it is often with only water even if there is soap available nearby outside the toilet and in the cooking area. Grandmothers probably have not understood the need for doing so, and if they are the caretakers of young children while mothers are busy with household chores and they have to feed the children, this increases the children's risk of contamination and subsequent morbidity. There is an acute lack of latrines and tube wells in the program areas. Pit latrines get inundated with flood water and there is water logging for 6-9 months. Many of the existing latrines have broken water seals as people break them if there is not enough water for flushing. However, the new plastic "sato pans" seem to more durable as well as more affordable. Most latrines, with sharp tin doors or uneven floors, are not at all suitable for young children, pregnant women, elderly and disabled people. As a consequence, the "open defecation free" target may not be achieved. Some men reported having constructed latrines up to five times in their adult life as these were repeatedly washed away during the floods. The haors pose another kind of problem as there is insufficient land for individual families to have their own latrines. Community latrines are not maintained by any particular person and often cannot be locked properly, so women hesitate to use them. Schools, even those used as shelters, do not have an adequate number of latrines, and again the girls are the ones who suffer the most. Relative to consumption of safe water, there seems to be fairly good awareness about the importance of safe water consumption, but the practices are constrained by access to potable water. As tube wells lack platforms, there is constant leakage from the surface to the ground water. Arsenic assessments are ongoing, but people are not aware of what will be done after that.

**RECOMMENDATION #9**  
**WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE**  
*BRING A WASH TECHNOLOGIST IN TO DESIGN SUITABLE LATRINES AND  
 FORMULATE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POTABLE WATER, ESPECIALLY FOR HAOR*

Existing latrines should be properly maintained. Advocacy for installation of suitable community latrines at central high areas/shelters should continue and appointing someone to maintain each latrine could provide income generation for that person. A WASH technologist is suggested for designing appropriate latrines for these areas considering all the specific problematic issues and for exploring other options, such as eco-san or biogas latrines.

While the priority for this specialist should be on sanitation technology, potable water is also an issue in the deep haor areas, and the WASH technologist should also identify opportunities for improving access to appropriate potable water technologies.

## **B. THEME B: Sustaining Impact**

The SHOUHARDO III Program is already achieving some nice impact with changes in behavior and practices, increasing capital and investment, and risk reduction planning. The program needs to be more

proactive, however, in ensuring that these changes are sustained beyond the program life. In the next two years, focus across the program should be on systematically thinking about what is required to sustain the impact being achieved by the program after the program ends. Following the current thinking within FFP, the program should identify sustainability constraints related to the resources, capacities, motivation and linkages that are required to sustain impact.

I. Recommendation #10: Sustainability Strategy. At the time of the MTE, the SHOUHARDO III program is well advanced toward achieving most targets, and positive impacts are being achieved across all five purposes. The main intervention mechanisms are all in place, including village level groups and communities, and interactions with government structures are well established. The MTE has observed that the capacities of individuals, groups, and government structures have been enhanced in many ways. Until now, these achievements and impacts have been achieved through the direct intervention of program field staff, volunteers and field facilitators. While this intervention strategy of direct program support has been appropriate in the first phase of the program, it is now time for the program to reorient its approach from direct support to participants and stakeholders to one that will ensure the sustainability of the program interventions after the program itself ends.

Evidence from the field raises questions about the sustainability of program interventions, as they are currently being implemented. Program supported groups, do not have vision or clear sense of purpose. Community groups (FFBS, EKATA, youth groups, VDC) have clearly received and adopted messages from the program, but members of these groups are not able to provide a clear statement of the long-term vision or purpose of their groups.

With government stakeholders, the issue is less one of vision (the government stakeholders have mandates that align quite closely with program objectives), but rather one of securing access to necessary financial resources for the government institutions to continue the activities that the program current supports through its own resources.

The activities of SBTBs are currently being supported primarily by program field facilitators. Teachers and school staff are mostly engaged only in the process of selection of students to participate in the brigades. Under this implementation strategy, the SBTBs will likely not continue after the program ends.

The program is developing some key linkages among community groups and other key stakeholders. Farmer groups are developing linkages with buyers and input providers. VDCs are establishing strong links with union level government bodies. But other linkages to potential stakeholders that could help to sustain the activities of the groups are also important. Farm groups need linkages with other kinds of organizations that can support new activities, such as providers of information about new agricultural and livestock practices, new market opportunities, and so on. VDCs, EKATA groups, and SBTBs need contacts and links with other organizations that could provide funding and technical support services to these groups.

The program has already considered sustainability of program interventions in the proposal document and in the program integration strategy. The PIIF document identifies (i) assumptions for why some program interventions are expected to become self-sustaining and (ii) actions that need to be taken in order to sustain program-supported actions after SHOUHARDO III ends. These are important first steps to developing an effective sustainability strategy. However, the program must now consider not only what needs to be done in order to support sustainability of program achievements, but also how to change program implementation strategies in ways to promote sustainability. In particular the program needs to consider appropriate ways to reorient how it interacts with all types of stakeholders, moving

away from direct service delivery and support, to one of coordination, monitoring and occasional remedial support only when needed.

### **RECOMMENDATION #10 SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY**

*DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY ACROSS THE PROGRAM TO ENSURE THAT PROGRAM IMPACT IS SUSTAINED. AS THIS STRATEGY IS IMPLEMENTED, THE ROLE OF THE PROGRAM WITH COMMUNITY GROUPS AND OTHER PROGRAM STAKEHOLDERS SHOULD BE REDUCED FROM DIRECT AND ON-GOING SUPPORT TO ONE OF MONITORING AND OCCASIONAL REMEDIAL SUPPORT.*

This sustainability strategy should be designed in accordance with the FFP guidance on developing sustainability and exit strategies<sup>34</sup>. In particular, this guidance document stresses the need to address four factors: resources, capacities, motivation, and linkages, to design effective sustainability strategies. Several specific steps should be taken as part of this process in developing a sustainability strategy:

- The first step in developing the strategy should be to work with all of the community level organizations that have been created by the programs to help them to assimilate a clear vision of the purpose of each of the groups, a vision that provides a clear rationale to the members and the PEP households in the communities for why these groups should continue to exist, and what are the specific benefits that they will provide to their members and PEP households in the communities. This visioning exercise should also stress the importance to view these groups as institutions where members are brought in as needed, not simply the particular individuals that have received direct support by the program.
- The next step in developing the strategy would be to undertake an assessment of all the program stakeholders, including community groups, government institutions, schools, and private sector agents, to identify the threats and opportunities that face each of these groups to sustain their activities. Based on this assessment the strategy should identify ways to address the threats and take advantage of the opportunities.
- The sustainability strategy should also identify all the important stakeholders that these groups should work with to provide the necessary services, and access to financial support if necessary, that will support the continuing effective operation of these groups.

This reorientation of the program toward implementing activities in ways to support sustaining impact should not require additional resources. Rather, it will require a reorientation of program staff later in the program's life away from direct implementation toward providing more indirect support and monitoring of activities of the program stakeholders.

### **C. THEME C: Focusing on Adolescents and Youth**

Adolescents and youth are the future of Bangladesh. They are also generally enthusiastic, willing to learn, and influential, not only with peers, but also with family members. Without guidance and capacity building, they could become the future's poor. But with guidance and support, they will be the future's leaders. Many stakeholders interviewed during the MTE expressed an interest in finding ways to work more effectively with this next generation.

<sup>34</sup> Beatrice Lorge Rogers and Jennifer Coates, *Sustaining Development: A Synthesis of Results from a Four-Country Study of Sustainability and Exit Strategies among Development Food Assistance Projects*, FANTA III, 2015.

I. Recommendation #11: Youth Employment. An oft-heard response from SHOUHARDO III implementing staff was that the target for youth employment was too high for the number of youth who are able to meet the criteria set by the program for receiving training support from the program. In April 2017, the program developed a Youth Employability Skills Development Strategy to guide implementation of this intervention. The criteria for participation defined in the strategy are that:

- Youth must be selected from the database of participant PEP households.
- Youth must be between 16 and 25 years of age. Although youth are defined by the Government of Bangladesh as up to age 35, it is likely that most participants will be between 16-25 years of age, as family demands and livelihoods restrict older youth from attending training and limit their interest in such opportunities. A limited number of participants age 26-30 may be included, capped at 25/ district, if this is deemed necessary following consultations with local leadership.
- Female youth, particularly those who are divorced, widowed, separated or were abandoned by the husband, will be prioritized.
- Education: Minimum Grade 5 (with exception made for construction training).
- Youth group participants will be prioritized.
- Personal interest and commitment to attend; selected youth and family will be required to agree to a term of commitment to attend the training, facilitated through the VDC and EKATA groups (in the case of young women).
- Maximum one youth/ family.

These criteria do not appear to be significantly restrictive, and the MTE found many participants who met these criteria but had not been selected for participation, suggesting that the problem may be less a function of the criteria and more a function of the capacity of the program to seek out and screen potential participants. This component of the program is currently being delivered by CAVs and field facilitators, supported to some extent by the recently recruited Marketing Facilitators. The program does not have dedicated staff responsible for youth employment, even at the strategy development level. The responsibility for guiding the youth employment component was first assigned to the STC-PSE, then shifted to the STC-Life Skills, both of whom have other responsibilities. The program needs to give more resources and attention to the youth employment component of the program.

### **RECOMMENDATION #11 YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**

*THE PROGRAM SHOULD (1) EXPAND THE TECHNICAL CAPACITY OF THE PROGRAM TO SUPPORT YOUTH EMPLOYMENT WITH DEDICATED STAFF, (2) REDUCE THE TARGETS TO A MORE MANAGEABLE LEVEL GIVEN THE TIME AVAILABLE, E.G., 7,500 INSTEAD OF 10,000, AND (3) IMPLEMENT THE YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AS DESIGNED.*

The three elements in this recommendation are fairly straightforward. The program needs more staff dedicated to designing and implementing youth employment strategies; and, ideally, these staff will have experience implementing similar programs successfully. SHOUHARDO III has a nicely crafted Youth Employability Skills Development Strategy<sup>35</sup> that, basically, needs to have staff dedicated to implementing it.

<sup>35</sup> The strategy was developed by a CARE USA headquarters-based technical advisor, unlike most of the other SHOUHARDO III program strategies which were developed by program-based STCs.

A target of 10,000 would normally be achievable with a good strategy and dedicated staff. However, because there is only two and half years remaining for implementing the program, it makes sense to reduce the target to an achievable level for that time frame.

It's important to recognize that the objective to which youth employment is contributing is increased income for PEP households. So, the program should not just be monitoring the completion of training but also the full process from trainee selection through training counseling, the training itself, job counseling, and finally job placement. This means that skills training should be closely aligned with job market opportunities and local market capacities. When the final evaluation comes, success will be measured against the number of youth who have found jobs or become self-employed, not the number who have been trained.

**2. Recommendation #12: Adolescent Engagement.** The engagement of adolescent girls and boys is a key area in SHOUHARDO III. The program recognizes that adolescents can help shape the future by promoting positive changes in gender and social norms and involves adolescent youth across all of its activities. Purpose 2 works to educate adolescent girls and their mothers on age-appropriate health and nutrition practices. Purpose 3 works to ensure that adolescent girls attain leadership positions in VDCs, UDMCs, and UzDMCs and enlists boys and girls to monitor disaster risk preparedness in their communities and disaster reduction plans. Purpose 4 includes adolescent girls in EKATA groups and provides life skills and training in women's empowerment issues to both boys and girls. Purpose 5 includes adolescents in youth groups as active participants in its work to strengthen community relationships with local government and service providers.

Adolescents will form the future society of Bangladesh. The adolescents interviewed by the MTE team possessed tremendous enthusiasm, willingness to learn, motivation, and confidence. They exhibited a good understanding of key program concepts and many were better able to explain these concepts than their parents. The girls and boys in SHOUHARDO III are generally receptive to, and sometimes more passionate about, new ideas and new ways of doing things and can act as change agents to influence the attitudes of their peers, parents, neighbors and siblings. These adolescents will become parents and future leaders in their communities and with the type of guidance and support provided by SHOUHARDO III, they can embody the sustainable change in society that the program aims to achieve.

The young participants are particularly open to messages about behavior and attitude changes that will affect their later lives. However, many live in remote villages that lack good communication with upazila and union level offices and have few channels for obtaining information and learning of new ideas and practices that can improve their lives. This is especially true for adolescent girls, who will eventually marry, leave their SHOUHARDO III-supported communities, and who may find themselves isolated within new households and villages. Without strong connections to ideas and opportunities outside of their villages, it may be difficult for adolescents to sustain and build upon the practices learned from SHOUHARDO III.

The mutually supportive relationship between the program, its activities, and adolescents can be further enhanced by expanding opportunities to engage with groups and activities beyond their communities and giving them access to a wider world outside their villages which will help them use their knowledge. For example, presently School-Based Teen Brigades are trained to promote good health, hygiene and nutrition behaviors and positive social/gender norms, conduct rallies, and disseminate information. SBTBs effectively support early warning in program communities. However, school staff do not have sufficient capacity to support SBTBs after project ends. Since VDCs and teachers are also members of the UDMCs, SHOUHARDO III should build on the early warning work done by the SBTBs by involving SBTB members in their work with the UDMCs.

SHOUHARDO III facilitates campaigns through sports and cultural events for youth and organizes folk dramas to reach out to the community about government services. However, adolescents and youth

groups have few direct links with the Ministry of Youth and Sports. More direct interaction between adolescents and the Ministry of Youth and Sports should be facilitated by the program to help ensure that in future, boys and girls have the opportunity to engage in area or district-wide cultural and sports events that can bring them into contact with peers outside of their communities.

Through the women's empowerment activities, the aspirations of adolescent girls in EKATA groups have been raised. They want to finish school, find jobs, and delay marriage. It is an open question what will become of these aspirations once a young woman marries into a family that is not familiar with the messages of SHOUHARDO III. These young women say that they will talk to their new families and gradually persuade them to adopt new ideas. Stronger external links for adolescent girls to external groups such as the District Women's Affairs Committee and their activities, and the ability to participate in *Nari Nirjaton Protirodh* Committees and Ending Violence Against Women forums can provide new opportunities for them to engage more broadly in civic life. It can also give newly married young women the confidence and support they need to bring SHOUHARDO III's concepts into a new household.

Other youth groups also have much enthusiasm and understand the messages they have received from the program but are unable to articulate a vision or purpose for their groups. As SHOUHARDO III focuses on its sustainability strategy in the next few years, one of its key activities should be to work with adolescents in their various activities to help them forge the external links that will facilitate a two-way exchange of ideas with the broader society.

### **RECOMMENDATION #12**

### **ADOLESCENT ENGAGEMENT**

*FIND WAYS TO ENGAGE ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND BOYS IN A BROADER RANGE OF ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT, GENDER EQUALITY AND OTHER MESSAGES.*

Many of the linkages mentioned are part of the program activities and so should not require additional funds. These linkages should be strengthened and should focus on expanding the involvement of girls and boys in higher level activities at the union and upazila level as well as in actions that bring them into contact with people outside of their communities.

**3. Recommendation #13: New Households.** The MTE observed that older women/grandmothers pointed out that either their son or their daughter, who was initially part of their household during the well-being analysis, had now married and set up their own separate households. When the daughter or daughter-in-law in this offshoot household got pregnant she was not provided the supplementary rations that were given to other pregnant and lactating mothers. This caused unhappiness in the father's house. CHVs also mentioned that they were questioned/criticized/rebuked for discriminating against these young married couples and not promoting nutrition awareness or providing rations like they did for other PLWs. Young married women who were not included in the current PEP households as they had been away at the time of the initial survey, were not invited to courtyard sessions for promoting nutrition awareness for PLWs and adolescent girls. Those with whom the MTE had an opportunity to interact were seen to be adolescents, and some of them were anemic but were not aware that they should be taking iron and folic acid tablets or from where they could obtain these tablets. They also had not been actively invited to EKATA group meetings. These young married girls are in need of essential nutrition and contraceptive information so that they can delay the first pregnancy. Husbands can

influence a mother-in-law, and resultant decision making for HHN and WASH issues, thus it is important that they be invited to join the program along with their wives when they are newly-wed couples. They would also benefit from joining other program groups under Purpose I.

### **RECOMMENDATION #13 NEW HOUSEHOLDS**

*TARGET YOUNG, NEWLY-WED PEP HOUSEHOLDS, WHO HAVE BECOME ESTABLISHED AFTER THE INITIAL WELL-BEING ANALYSIS, FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM.*

This recommendation is not intended to expand the participant target numbers. It is intended, rather, to fill gaps in the participant database either as a result of the need to select more participants for certain interventions or to fill gaps from attrition in the data base as identified households move out of the program area. The concept is that, if a new participant needs to be selected, the first priority should be for newlywed households who are identified as poor or extreme poor.

#### **D. THEME D: Refining Implementation Systems**

Implementation systems include program management systems, partner relations, collaborative learning and action systems, integration and complementarity, and resource management systems for money, commodities, staff and materials and equipment. Even the most well-designed program can fail if implementation systems are not made as efficient and effective as possible. While for the most part, the implementation systems in the SHOUHARDO III Program are functioning effectively, there are a few changes that need to be made to improve efficiency of program delivery.

I. Recommendation #14: Staff Structure. SHOUHARDO III has capable partners and many experienced and dedicated staff and volunteers. Implementation and program quality are challenged by several issues that arise from the current program structure. This recommendation proposes changes to address specific structural constraints identified by the MTE.

The number of program staff serving the Char and Haor Regions is based on the target population. Due to higher densities in the Char Region, NGO partners there cover only one district. NGO partners in the Haor Region, with its more dispersed population, must implement the program in two districts. The population-based approach does not take the geographic spread and seasonal challenges in the haor into account, nor their impact on the level of technical support that can be delivered. Consequently, achieving adequate coverage in the Haor Region is difficult, especially during the monsoon season when villages may be costly to reach for months at a time, and partner staff are unable to provide the same level of support as in the Char Region. To ensure that haor participants receive the same level of technical support as other program communities, SHOUHARDO III should increase the number of TOs and base the additional TOs in the second district, enabling them to reduce travel time and spend more time interacting with program communities and other stakeholders.

A second constraint to the staff structure that affects program quality is the distribution of CEVs. CAVs and CHVs cover one village each. CEVs must cover two villages, though their workload is comparable to that of the other volunteers. CEVs are based in one village but must personally pay their travel costs to reach their second village. This can cost CEVs from BDT 200 to 500 per month, or 10% to 25% of their monthly remuneration, depending on where they are posted and the distances they must travel. Other volunteers do not bear these additional costs and all volunteers are paid the same remuneration. Travel to a second village poses security risks for female CEVs, forcing them to cut short sessions and household visits so they can return home before dark. In addition, CEVs do not receive any immediate financial benefit from their training, unlike CAVs who can use their technical training for their own

activities. The CEVs (and many staff) see their overall situation as inequitable. This, and the cumulative challenges have propelled a dropout rate of up to 50% among CEVs, affecting the quality of training in women's empowerment and gender equality, key program components. For these reasons, the MTE recommends that one CEV be assigned to one village only, and that the program recruit and train additional CEVs to cover the remaining villages.

Purpose 5 seeks to improve public service delivery and accountability to PEP households while strengthening the ability of poor communities to demand services. The success of this objective is interconnected with the other purposes and is critical to post-program sustainability. Like the other purposes, strengthening governance activities carries its own suite of specific labor-intensive actions, which include mobilizing VDCs and youth groups, liaising with service providers, establishing joint forums with community groups and LEBs/NBDs at the UP and upazila levels and facilitating the inclusion of program participants. Unlike the other purposes in SHOUHARDO III, Purpose 5 does not have a dedicated TO in the partner organizations to manage the development of these relationships and to ensure that NBDs in particular make changes to become more responsive to demands for public services. The absence of a Purpose 5 TO means that staff do not have time to follow up with important government bodies such as the UDCCs, which deliver frontline public services but are not fully functional in most unions. Governance activities must be handled by the Assistant Project Managers who already have a full workload. The MTE finds that a TO is needed in partner organizations to adequately oversee the implementation of Purpose 5 activities to the same degree as other Purposes.

Volunteers are the primary point of contact between SHOUHARDO III and its participants, and many are dedicated and performing to the best of their ability. SHOUHARDO III plans to phase out volunteers by the end of 2018. The purpose is to help communities develop their own pathways to sustainability by accompanying them but phasing down program support in the latter years of the program. While this is a worthwhile objective, the MTE has observed that volunteer capacity, and thus their ability to provide technical training, particularly in more complex concepts and applications, is limited. The result is that key program concepts are not yet deeply understood by many groups and individuals. In addition, the behavior changes and shift in cultural norms sought by the program, particularly in gender relations, is a slow process that requires sustained motivation and support. As outlined in Recommendation #4, volunteer capacity and impact can be strengthened in order to better prepare households and communities to internalize the lessons of SHOUHARDO III and sustain their activities after the program ends. However, strengthening volunteers and communities along with sustainability, will require more time; hence the MTE recommends that the phase-out of volunteers be postponed until the end of 2019.

### **RECOMMENDATION #14 STAFF STRUCTURE**

**ADDRESS THE MAJOR STAFF STRUCTURE CONSTRAINTS AFFECTING PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION.**

- *IN ORDER FOR EACH PARTNER IN THE HAOR TO COVER TWO DISTRICTS, INCREASE THE NUMBER OF TOS AND BASE THE TOS IN THE OTHER DISTRICT.*
- *ASSIGN ONE CEV TO ONE VILLAGE ONLY.*
- *RECRUIT A TECHNICAL OFFICER FOR PURPOSE 5 FOR EACH PARTNER.*
- *POSTPONE PHASE-OUT OF VOLUNTEERS UNTIL 2019.*

The addition of more staff has budget implications in that it creates an additional cost to the program, though the low remuneration of CEVS (BDT 2100 per month) makes this a relatively small cost. The

cost of adding more CEVs could be addressed in two ways. If CEVs are phased out of some communities it will generate savings that can be used to hire new CEVs. Additional costs might be met with the savings generated from reducing the frequency of the QLSMs (see Recommendation #5). To finance the addition of more TOs and extending volunteers through FY 2019, the MTE notes that the program was underspent at the time of the evaluation. The feasibility of using underutilized program funds to cover these costs should be explored.

**2. Recommendation #15: Refresher Training.** During the MTE, courtyard sessions were observed with a large number of participants and mostly one-way interaction. As experiences were not shared, problems were not identified or noted for follow-up during household visits. During household visits, there was only a repetition of the messages provided during the courtyard sessions, without any effort to observe or understand the actual feeding and dietary practices of mothers and young children. Volunteers informed that only a 5-day basic training had been held at the beginning of the program 2 years ago, but no refresher training had been provided. The QLSM sessions are supposed to do this, but volunteers did not seem to have benefited much from them as they are too rushed, with too many topics. The guidelines used are too sophisticated for education levels of most of the volunteers, and visual aids for training of participants are insufficient. Supervisory field staff did not seem to have more practical skills than the volunteers and did not provide real feedback/ additional information during the visits when they accompanied the volunteers.

### **RECOMMENDATION #15 REFRESHER TRAINING**

*CONDUCT REFRESHER TRAINING FOR FRONT-LINE STAFF (VOLUNTEERS, FIELD FACILITATORS, FIELD SUPERVISORS) BASED ON A REFINEMENT OF THE TRAINING MODULES IDENTIFYING KEY MESSAGES THAT ARE HAVING OR LIKELY TO HAVE SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT.*

The training modules can be reviewed again in-house, simplified where indicated, and priority messages highlighted. Refresher trainings should be conducted by trainers who are experienced and can demonstrate hands-on practical skills to the field staff. Role plays are excellent for adult learning and must be used on a regular basis. Courtyard sessions can be improved substantially if technical officers show the volunteers how they can make them more interactive and useful.

**3. Recommendation #16: Distributed Food.** A total of 11,540 metric tons of Title II commodities including whole wheat, refined vegetable oil and yellow split peas have been approved for direct distribution under SHOUHARDO III to pregnant and lactating women and children and their families representing 52,681 recipients from PEP households. Management of commodity distribution is complex and challenging. It is mandated by a range of critical steps in the supply chain management process, despite a range of significant challenges including threat of natural disaster and limited availability of warehouse and transport facilities. The food ration is also enormously expensive considering that it is procured and shipped from the USA and requires a substantial ITSH budget for commodity management. Other Title II Programs in Bangladesh (and in some other countries) do not distribute food. The results are still pending as to how successful they have been at achieving impact without distributed food.

In the initial Request for Applications for Title II Development Food Assistance Projects for Bangladesh and Mali in 2015, it was stated that “activity and ration design should always plan for phase over to locally available foods, so that appropriate dietary diversity and adequate complementary feeding can be

sustainable beyond the life of the program. Gaps in availability of or access to nutritionally dense foods should inform agriculture and livelihood activity design.”

While the MTE considered making a recommendation to discontinue the distribution of food (see section V.A. below for more detail), SHOUHARDO III is operating in remote chars and deep haors where markets are relatively dysfunctional during the monsoon season, so there may be a need to continue meeting the food gap during this period with distributed food. However, Title II Programs need to innovate in the way that food is used for program purposes, and SHOUHARDO III should explore alternative mechanisms for making food available, such as cash or vouchers, in the other program areas, i.e., the attached chars and marginal haors in which markets and vendors exist.

CARE should consult the SHOUHARDO III stakeholders about alternate food distribution systems and establish a strong community outreach to ensure full understanding of the community of the pilot activity purpose and objectives. Simultaneously, community choice and preference of commodities should be explored during this period.

### **RECOMMENDATION #16 DISTRIBUTED FOOD**

*PILOT AN ALTERNATIVE FOOD DISTRIBUTION MECHANISM (VOUCHERS OR CASH) IN THE ATTACHED CHAR OR MARGINAL HAOR CONTEXT TO ACQUIRE FIRSTHAND EXPERIENCE WITH DIFFERENT WAYS TO MAKE FOOD AVAILABLE FOR PLW.*

The program can pilot voucher or cash approaches that could facilitate access to locally produced specialty food products such as yellow lentils (which was proposed in the SHOUHARDO III technical proposal to FFP/USAID), fortified rice, and micro-nutrient supplements<sup>36</sup>. Vendors (both registered and petty traders) could be encouraged to participate in SHOUHARDO III through a screening process for pre-selection and later registration in the program. Vendors will be selected based upon the quality of their products, proximity to target geographies, and their ability to forward-stock required food products appropriate for supplemental feeding. Where possible, multiple vendors will be identified to serve targeted geographies to ensure uninterrupted supply.

Each of the vendors selected should be coached initially through the first few redemptions to get used to the proposed voucher system. The program team will monitor voucher redemption rates as well as work with the vendors on their capacity building and further linking local suppliers and producers to markets. The program should also ensure that packages provide information regarding the nutrition facts and best use by date. Through its partnership with ACI, USAID/SMC, and GAIN, CARE will facilitate the establishment of local dealer agents in communities. These companies will be engaged to train their local agents as well as the program selected vendors.

As with commodity management, commodities purchase and utilization should be closely monitored including on-the-spot check by program staff at the vendor and household levels. The program should develop guidelines on the whole process including governance risks, if any, to be addressed through the monitoring and control systems.

## **V. HIGHER LEVEL OBSERVATIONS**

<sup>36</sup> Moni-mix is produced by the Social Marketing Company (SMC) and contains vitamins and minerals. Pushtikana is produced by Renata Limited and contains fifteen essential vitamins and minerals. Both are nutrition-focused supplements for children.

The MTE identified a number of other observations that go beyond the capacity of the SHOUHARDO III Program to address but may be of interest to SHOUHARDO III stakeholders or FFP.

### **A. Distributed Food for PLW and Children**

At the time the SHOUHARDO III Program was designed, a number of underlying causes of food security were identified, including gender inequality and the lack of women's empowerment, lack of access to arable land, few off-farm income generating opportunities, lack of access to quality inputs and markets, lack of savings for productive investment and to mitigate the impact of shocks, lack of access to financial services, insecure land rights, lack of access to national social safety nets, poor coverage and quality of government services, and frequent natural disasters and man-made shocks. These form the basis for the Theory of Change upon which the SHOUHARDO III Program Strategy has been developed. The only factor among these that would justify a program strategy that includes direct distribution of food to PEP households would be natural disasters that require a short-term emergency response.

Historically, Title II programs have included a food distribution component, and there is no question that distributed food has impact on nutrition and preventing child malnutrition. The more important question is does the impact created by the food justify the cost, or, are there more efficient uses of the resources that will achieve greater impact? The costs should be measured in terms of the resources used to purchase and ship food from the USA, the resources used to manage the commodities in-country from port to end user, the costs to recipients, and the non-financial costs in terms of diverting attention away from other interventions and cultivating expectations from participants that Title II programs will give them food.

As mentioned, over the life of the program, SHOUHARDO III expects to reach 52,681 pregnant or lactating women and children under two with food distributions. The SHOUHARDO III MTE confirmed that impact is being achieved with distributed food, but the level of impact being achieved by the food is not as high as expected. The food that is provided is always shared not only within the household but also often outside of the household to generate social capital. The rations have been calculated mainly for pregnant and lactating women and children between the ages of six months and two years in order to prevent child malnutrition in the first thousand days. The amount of distributed food that is actually consumed by this target group, however, is reduced because of the sharing.

For this impact, the SHOUHARDO III Program plans to spend US\$ 7,054,199 to purchase and ship commodities for distribution and US\$ 5,104,800 on ITSH which covers the direct costs of delivering and monitoring the commodities in-country. There are additional costs associated with food distribution, however, in terms of time and attention by management staff at different levels to plan, support and monitor commodity distribution. At the recipient level, the MTE heard from respondents that much time was required to obtain the food, and they also incurred out-of-pocket costs for milling the wheat received and for paying transport costs. On the non-financial costs, the SHOUHARDO III Program has done a fairly good job of minimizing the cultivating of expectations from participants to receive food. Nevertheless, the MTE heard requests on occasion for more food<sup>37</sup>. The attention on food diverts attention away from the key messages<sup>38</sup> being promoted by the program. More concerning is that the MTE also heard from some implementing staff in some of the partner NGOs that they would like to see more food being distributed, because it makes people (and staff) happy, even though it does not result in

<sup>37</sup> These requests seemed to be coming more from the perspective of something physical that the program has given to participants and not from a true felt need.

<sup>38</sup> When food, cash, tools, seeds, or other very tangible benefits are distributed in a program, participants generally give less attention to program messages that are just promoting behavioral change without any immediate tangible benefit. Their expectation is that a program will bring other tangible benefits if they emphasize that these are the benefits that they appreciate most.

long-term sustainable development.

When a MTE is done, it is usually too late to make major changes to commodity use strategies in a program since most food has been distributed, is enroute on the high seas, has been called forward, or is about to be called forward. Perhaps it is time, however, to step back and compare the impact generated by direct distribution of food against the costs of doing so, in future Title III programs. In the meantime, SHOUHARDO III should pilot alternative food distributions mechanisms (see Recommendation #16), since it is too late practically in the program to stop all food distribution.

## **B. Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators**

One challenge that the program's M&E system faces is the need to collect certain indicators, particularly those related to agriculture – gross margins and value of incremental sales – that are required by FFP. These indicators are collected in the annual BBSS. Collection of the information needed to measure these indicators greatly adds to the length of the BBSS interviews, and the information is difficult for farmers to provide accurately. In addition, these indicators are of limited value for project management purposes. The essential problem for interpretation is that there are a many non-program related factors that affect these variables (changes in market prices of inputs and outputs, weather and other external factors that affect yields) that it is impossible to associate changes in these highly aggregated and complex indicators with program activities. Of more direct interest for program management purposes is information about beneficiaries' adoption of specific agricultural production practices and marketing strategies (e.g. sales through farmer marketing groups). The need to measure these indicators increases the cost to the program of implementing the BBSS. If these particular agriculture-related indicators (gross margins, value of incremental sales) are required for reporting purposes by FFP, then they should be collected independently by FFP, and not required to be financed out of program resources. The other RiA indicators provide useful information for program management purposes, so assigning responsibility for reporting these indicators to programs is appropriate.

## **C. WASH Investments**

Improvement of hygiene practices along with water and sanitation facilities is crucial in order to achieve and sustain good health and nutrition status of the population. Interruption of the critical pathways for fecal-oral contamination is more important in case of children, who are more vulnerable and prone to childhood illnesses that contribute to and exacerbate malnutrition.

Even in the normal context, WASH infrastructure and service delivery is expensive, and it is well recognized that the currently available infrastructure is reportedly unsuitable for the Char and Haor Regions. In the remote chars, everything gets submerged when the rains come, and infrastructure is damaged/lost. In the deep haor, there is not enough land to build appropriate and an adequate number of latrines that will last. Targeting is required for the critical WASH infrastructure projects such as community water points, community sanitation facilities, and proper storm drainage. The importance of proper drainage should not be overlooked as contaminated standing water from heavy rains or flooding not only limits mobility, is a risk for young children, and is a critical health threat to the affected communities. Frequent and persistent flooding often destroys low-lying sanitation facilities, contaminates drinking water wells and other water sources, and leads to large amounts of contaminated standing water that community members are invariably forced to use for drinking water. Resources will also be required for testing of arsenic levels in drinking water, for training to promote practical WASH solutions during emergencies such as boiling of drinking water and temporary pit latrines, and for advocacy to motivate VDCs to use cash for work allocations from government for improving water sources.

The original technical application for SHOUHARDO III contained a component that invested in WASH infrastructure. During the negotiations toward final approval, this component was removed from the program, mainly due to its cost. This is not an uncommon decision for Title II programs because of the

costs of WASH infrastructure and the assumption that effective linkages can be made with government or other organizations implementing WASH interventions. It does not often happen that way, however, and the need for effective WASH infrastructure is critical in the context where SHOUHARDO III is working. The MTE observed that poor or total absence of good WASH infrastructure especially in the remote chars and deep haor is having negative impact on the health of PEP households. Title II programs need to start investing more in WASH infrastructure in contexts where significant impact can be achieved.

## **VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The SHOUHARDO III Program is already producing some encouraging sustainable impact as has been described. The recent scaling up of activities in the third year of the program is threatening to reduce program quality, however, so the program needs to bring more focus on ensuring that impact continues to occur. The MTE is also recommending that the program undertake a systematic process for ensuring that the impact that is being achieved is sustained beyond the life of the program. The young generation of adults and adolescents from PEP households are going to face substantial challenges in finding sustainable livelihoods. Most are not going to be able to duplicate the livelihoods of their fathers and will have to find alternatives, so that they don't become tomorrow's extreme poor. Just as the SHOUHARDO programs have set the standard for women's empowerment in Title II programs, SHOUHARDO III can define a model for effective strategies to promote livelihoods for youth.

## SHOUHARDO III Mid-Term Evaluation PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

### *ENSURING PROGRAM QUALITY (9)*

**RECOMMENDATION #1 (Deep Haor Livelihoods Strategy):** Develop a livelihoods strategy for the deep haor, especially for the lean period in the summer.

**RECOMMENDATION #2 (Technical Capacities Closer to the Front-Lines):** Shift more of the technical capacities closer to the front-lines to monitor training and build capacities where needed.

**RECOMMENDATION #3: (Technical Capacities in Purpose I):** Shift technical capacities under Purpose I more toward off-farm IGAs, youth employment and VSLA.

**RECOMMENDATION #4 (Volunteer Workload):** Find ways to reduce the workload and increase the impact of volunteers, i.e., CAVs, CHVs and CEVs.

- Revise the modules to simplify them, identify messages that are having the greatest impact and focus on these.
- Make training materials more participatory and add more pictorial training materials.
- Require less form-filling by eliminating some forms and using simpler forms.

**RECOMMENDATION #5 (Quarterly Learning and Sharing Meetings):** Change the format of the QLSM to be residential and organized at six-month intervals.

**RECOMMENDATION #6 (VSLA Strategy):** Revise the strategy for VSLAs to conform more with best practice and FFP Minimum Standards for VSLAs.

**RECOMMENDATION #7 (New VSLAs):** Form new VSLAs with FFBSs and groups that are generating regular cash flow, e.g., maize FFBSs in the Char Region, Duck IGAs in the Haor Region, IGA groups, etc.

**RECOMMENDATION #8 (Growth Monitoring and Promotion):** Improve the quality of Growth Monitoring and Promotion services by:

- Reinforcing with service providers the importance of preventing child malnutrition and taking anthropometric measurements carefully, and
- Providing counseling and making referrals when growth faltering is observed.

**RECOMMENDATION #9 (Water, Sanitation & Hygiene):** Bring a WASH technologist in to design suitable latrines and formulate recommendations for potable water, especially for haor areas.

## **SUSTAINING IMPACT (1)**

**RECOMMENDATION #10 (Sustainability Strategy):** Develop and implement a sustainability strategy across the program to ensure that program impact is sustained. As this strategy is implemented, the role of the program with community groups and other program stakeholders should be reduced from direct and on-going support to one of monitoring and occasional remedial support.

## **STRONGER FOCUS ON ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH (3)**

**RECOMMENDATION #11 (Youth Employment):** The program should (1) expand the technical capacity of the program to support youth employment with dedicated staff, (2) reduce the targets to a more manageable level given the time available, e.g., 7,500 instead of 10,000, and (3) implement the Youth Employability Skills Development Strategy as designed.

**RECOMMENDATION #12 (Adolescent Engagement):** Find ways to engage adolescent girls and boys in a broader range of activities to promote women's empowerment, gender equality and other messages.

**RECOMMENDATION #13 (New Households):** Target young, newly-wed PEP households, who have become established after the initial well-being analysis, for participation in the program.

## **REFINING IMPLEMENTATION SYSTEMS (3)**

**RECOMMENDATION #14 (Staff Structure):** Address the major staff structure constraints affecting program implementation.

- In order for each partner in the haor to cover two districts, increase the number of TOs and base the TOs in the other district.
- Assign one CEV to one village only.
- Recruit a Technical Officer for Purpose 5 for each partner.
- Postpone phase-out of volunteers until 2019.

**RECOMMENDATION #15 (Refresher Training):** Conduct refresher training for front-line staff (volunteers, field facilitators, field supervisors) based on a refinement of the training modules identifying key messages that are having or likely to have substantial impact.

**RECOMMENDATION #16 (Distributed Food):** Pilot an alternative food distribution mechanism (vouchers or cash) in the attached char or marginal haor context to acquire firsthand experience with different ways to make food available for PLW.

### SHOUHARDO III Mid-Term Evaluation ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are observations and additional recommendations generated by the MTE that did not make the short-list of prioritized recommendations. These are still useful, however, for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the program.

#### CONTEXT

**Observations.** Critical features of the Char and Haor Regions are well-known to the program and mentioned often in the program document, annual reports, and formative research reports. It is worth noting, however, that there are three distinct contexts in the program area relevant for Purpose I. These are the:

- *Remote or Detached Chars* where land is more available than on attached chars but basic services are almost totally absent, transport costs in the monsoon season are high, and flooding in most areas is a regular annual event.
- *Deep Haor* where seasonal differences are amplified and life is very difficult every year in the summer/monsoon period with people concentrated on an “ati”, costly transportation and substantial migration.
- *Attached Chars/Marginal Haor* communities, which while affected by floods and the haor seasons are more similar to normal Bangladesh than to the remote areas in the Chars and the Haor.

Across all contexts, access to crop land for PEP households is relatively limited. The program’s PEP Household Census reported 24.8% in Char Districts and 22.6% in the Haor Districts have access to crop land. For the selected value chains, maize, sweet gourd and chili, these are highly appropriate in the Char Region, since many farmers are already producing these crops and land is available, especially in the remote chars. Although these are high value crops suitable for promotion for PEP households, they are less relevant in the Haor Region, especially the deep haor, with relatively few producers now and little land appropriate for these crops. Most land is more suited to rice production and controlled by wealthy landowners, although many PEP farm households in the Haor are engaged as sharecroppers for rice production.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-1:** Contextual differences need to be taken into account, so the program should disaggregate the program strategy by region, or even by each of the three contexts.

#### PURPOSE I – AGRICULTURE & LIVELIHOODS

**Observations.** The program currently has two CARE regional Technical Managers. One, based in Sirajganj, is responsible for Private Sector Engagement for both regions. The other, based in Kishoreganj, is responsible for Agriculture and Livelihoods in both Regions. Given that the value chains are different in each region, it is extremely difficult for one technical specialist to be effective in both regions. In addition, travel times between the regions are quite significant. It is also rather odd that, even though the program conducted a value chain analysis which used a conceptual framework that clearly connects production to marketing, the SHOUHARDO Program has drawn a line between production represented by the TM Agriculture and Livelihoods and marketing represented by the TM Private Sector Engagement. It makes much more sense to have a single position responsible for the full value chain, not just some parts of it.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-2:** Merge the A&L and PSE TM functions in one position, one for each region.

**Observations.** The MTE found some participants in Purpose I had not received their input support yet because they had not yet opened a Bank Asia account and were not clear when or how they were supposed to do this. The Bank Asia transfer process works okay in the attached chars and marginal haor areas, but it does not work very well in the remote chars or the deep haor contexts because Bank Asia is having difficulty finding agents in remote areas. In looking at alternatives to the Bank Asia cash transfer mechanism, the MTE found that migrant daily wage laborers from the remote areas are having success transferring remittances using BKash.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-3:** Continue using Bank Asia for context #3, but move to BKash for the other two contexts for distribution of input support.

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**Observations.** A follow-up input distribution is planned by the program, but it is not clear for what purpose. The first cash transfer has already reinforced the business planning concept. A second distribution will certainly increase capital for investment, but cash transfers are not the long-term solution for enabling PEP households to have more capital. The long-term solution is the VSLA. After the program ends, the vision should be that PEP households will be members of VSLAs from which they can obtain capital through loans or share-outs.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-4:** Replace the planned second distribution of input support with better linkages to a VSLA.

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**Observations.** The SHOUHARDO III Program is already having nice impact with some FFBS group leaders fulfilling roles as coordinators of bulk input purchase for groups and collective marketing of production, and the program has plans to scale up this capacity building of group leaders to also be the conduit for new ideas and technologies. Traditionally programs have assumed that the best approach is to build the capacities of group leaders to be technical experts. However, just as group leaders interact with input suppliers, who are specialized in input supply, and with buyers, who are specialized in the purchase and resale of agricultural products, a more effective approach for enabling group leaders to become conduits for new ideas and technologies is to link them to sources of such information, not make them into experts.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-5:** Expand the capacity building planned for group leaders to include developing linkages between them and sources of new ideas or technologies from the GoB, private sector, other programs and the farm research sector.

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**Observations.** After receiving Training of Trainers (ToT) training, the CAVs in Purpose I, with support from program Field Facilitators, organize the various groups and then conduct learning sessions. After completing a minimum number of learning sessions, the CAVs and FFs complete an individual business plan with each participant which is a required step for accessing a grant from the program for input support. The business plan is basically a two-page written document that verifies that a discussion has been held with each participant on sources of inputs, production plans and marketing plans for the activity that will be supported with a cash transfer by the program. Rather than a business “plan” that will be used by participants, it is more a one-off document that verifies that a planning discussion has been held. Many participants, especially women, are illiterate. They cannot complete the plan, nor will they use it again after the it has been developed. Completing the plan takes a long time, and CAVs usually require support from the field facilitator to write the plan for each participant. While it is extremely important to hold a business planning discussion with participants, the business plan document used in SHOUHARDO III is overly complicated.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-6:** Stop requiring the complicated business plans...use a more simplified checklist to indicate that a business planning discussion has been held with a participant.

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**Observations.** The statutes governing share-cropping in Bangladesh specify that a harvested crop should be divided into three parts with one-third going to the landowner, one-third going to whoever provided the other inputs (e.g., seed and fertilizer) for producing the crop, and one-third going to whoever provided the labor for producing the crop. These statutes were put in place to protect low-income sharecroppers who have traditionally received unfavorable terms. These terms were usually to divide the harvested crop in half with one-half going to the landowner and one-half going to the share-cropper, who typically also provided the inputs and labor. The MTE found that in the char areas, the legally mandated share-cropping terms were being followed. However, in the Haor Region, the 50-50 split was the usual practice.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-7:** Include in the Haor Region livelihoods strategy a plan to advocate for fair sharecropping terms for PEP households.

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**Observations.** The MTE was unable to find anyone at the senior levels within CARE or PNGOs who was an expert on the VSLA approach, i.e., someone who has seen an effective, functioning VSLA. SHOUHARDO III has some significant “baggage” relative to VSLA in that the two previous phases of the program implemented a Self-Help Group approach that is very, very different from a VSLA approach. Given that many current staff in the program from both CARE and the PNGOs have worked in the previous phases, they will be inclined to promote the Self-Help Group approach over the VSLA since that is what they know. To make the transition from the Self-Help Group approach to a VSLA approach, the program really needs to have a staff member who has seen CARE’s VSLA approach in practice and can effectively guide implementation.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-8:** Expand the technical capacity in the program for supporting the VSLA approach.

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**Observations.** As indicated in the main text of the report, the current practice of VSLA in SHOUHARDO III does not conform with either CARE’s best practice or FFP minimum standards for VSLAs. One of the priority recommendations (#6) is to revise the VSLA strategy. The question then becomes how to enable the current, flawed VSLAs to be able to transition to the new strategy. Given that there is not much time remaining in the life of the program and experience has shown that to become self-sustaining, a VSLA should complete two cycles (two share-outs), the program needs to start a process as soon as possible toward transitioning current VSLAs. As the new VSLA strategy is developed, it will become apparent when the program will be able to begin implementing the strategy. Shortly before this “start” date, plans should be implemented for all current VSLAs to have a share-out, so that they can hold discussions on the revised strategy and start the next cycle using the new strategy.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-9:** Complete the cycles for current VSLAs and work on reforming them to conform with the new strategy.

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**Observations.** In May and June of 2016, an Inclusive Value Chain Analysis was conducted by an external consulting firm to identify value chains to target by SHOUHARDO III in the Char and Haor Regions. The analysis identified maize and goat production for the Char Region and maize and bamboo fish traps (*chai*) for the Haor Region as the value chains having the greatest potential for targeted PEP households. At the time of the MTE, FFBS’s were organized across both regions around three field crop value chains, maize, chili and sweet gourd, as well as comprehensive homestead development (CHD).

The SHOUHARDO III Program is challenged by the need to continue to identify IGA opportunities related to farm production, on-farm processing, and off-farm, for PEP households. The Value Chain Analysis conducted were regional in scale. It was observed during the MTE that there are some very localized value chains that are currently providing livelihoods activities for PEP households and may, in fact, offer even greater opportunities. Because they are very localized, however, they have been

overlooked by regional-level analyses. Examples include the weaving industry in Sirajganj District and the rock-picking industry in Sunamganj District.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-10:** To identify and promote new marketing and employment opportunities, the program should give attention to local sub-sectors and conduct rapid value chain or sub-sector analyses to identify specific opportunities for PEP households.

**Observations.** In addition to looking at localized value chains as a source of IGA opportunities for PEP households, the SHOUHARDO III program may also want to revisit opportunities related to the processing of existing raw materials being produced in the Char and Haor Regions. These could include opportunities such as making puffed rice, for example.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-11:** Explore processing of existing raw materials, such as making puffed rice, for new IGAs.

**Observations.** A third source of new IGA opportunities for PEP households is to look for other products or services that can be absorbed into existing businesses which have grown as a result of the support from the program. An example would include a petty trading IGA that has grown into a shop-based retail trade business. With the visibility that this business now has, support could be provided for the business to provide additional products or services such as Bkash or farm input supply, for example.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-12:** Identify opportunities for new products or services in existing businesses.

**Observations.** Cash-for-Work is primarily an emergency response activity to enable households affected by a disaster to have some cash to be able to cope with the disaster. It is not a long-term development intervention unless some of the cash that has been provided can be invested in an IGA. The impact of cash provided through CFW is temporary since the cash is usually used for meeting basic needs. In the case of SHOUHARDO III, the CFW is not accompanied by any business planning so it is very unlikely to be invested by recipients, nor is it being linked to any government safety net program so that it might be continued after the program ends.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-13:** Discontinue CFW, since it does not build long-term resilience nor is the program trying to make it a sustainable safety net.

**Observations.** On the other side of CFW, it is being used to construct disaster risk reduction infrastructure. The wage rate that is being paid, however, is much less than the market wage rate. As a result, PNGOs report that it is very difficult to find good labor to do the construction. If the infrastructure is necessary and the most efficient way to construct it is with daily wage labor, then the program should simply build the infrastructure with labor paid at the normal market wage rate and eliminate references to CFW.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-14:** Contract labor to build the DRR infrastructure...don't call it Cash for Work.

## **PURPOSE 2 – HEALTH, HYGIENE AND NUTRITION**

**Observations.** The MTE observed that courtyard sessions were too big (sometimes more than 15 mothers and children) and were not interactive. CHVs were focused on giving many messages and did not give mothers the chance to share experiences or to voice concerns. Problems were not identified that would need follow-up at household visits or referral. For example, a mother had a miscarriage during her first pregnancy, but the CHV did not know, so did not advise extra care and regular antenatal checks at a health facility.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-15:** Conduct interactive courtyard sessions with smaller groups of mothers and identify problems that will need follow-up at the household level.

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**Observations.** Although adolescent girls were well versed about child marriage and eve teasing, they were neither clear why good nutrition was critical during adolescence, nor about the effect of poor menstrual hygiene on reproductive health. Few girls knew about the main recommendations for infant and young child feeding. There were married adolescent girls who were largely unaware of their nutrition requirements, were anemic but not taking iron and folate tablets, and had never been invited to courtyard/ EKATA sessions.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-16:** Give adolescent girls more information for improving their own nutrition and personal hygiene, including infant and young child feeding recommendations.

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**Observations.** Other family members are generally present when CHVs make household visits, but she does not involve them in the "counseling" sessions, actively try to get their opinions, or learn about their concerns. Grandmothers looking after a young child and feeding him/her are not careful about washing hands before feeding. These family members are the decision makers, and without their support, the mother is helpless.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-17:** Involvement of family members such as fathers/ husbands/ grandfathers and grandmothers in household visits and relevant group sessions should be ensured by supervisors.

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**Observations.** The School-Based Teen Brigades are based in a few specific schools, but the girls are either not aware of, nor in touch with other community-based adolescent groups. Both these groups could learn from each other.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-18:** Link SBTB with other adolescent groups in the community.

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**Observations.** The SBTB are given sessions by Field Facilitators or Field Supervisors. The teachers only role is in a committee that selects the students for the SBTB. As the teachers do not attend the training sessions, they are not knowledgeable about the contents, nor can they lead them.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-19:** Train school teachers for continuity of the SBTB after the program ends.

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**Observations.** Cow dung is dried and used for fuel in the chars and haors. In the form of big "cakes", it is stored in the roof of the houses for usage during floods. Both animal and human feces could be seen around the area. Since open defecation has not reduced substantially, and there is a dearth of sanitary latrines, other methods of human feces disposal/ utilization could be explored.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-20:** Explore opportunities for biogas production in the program areas.

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**Observations.** Although some sanitary latrines and tube wells have been built by individual households inside their houses or compounds by better off individuals, these cannot obviously be shown to the general public for demonstrations.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-21:** After completion of activities for Priority Recommendation #9 (WASH), establish demonstration latrines and tube-wells in Community Resource Centres (CRC) to display the technologies recommended by the WASH specialist.

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**Observations.** During visit to a school where there was a SBTB, the students informed the MTE that there were only two toilets for girls, one for boys and one for the teachers in the whole school (for

approx. four to five hundred children). This is extremely inadequate and discourages girls to go to school when they have menses. The situation is worse during floods when the schools are used as shelters for the local population.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-22:** The School-based Teen Brigade (SBTB) should advocate for more latrines in schools.

**Observations.** Some latrines and tube wells are used by a number of PEP families, but maintenance is no one's responsibility. In many cases, beneficiaries could not say who in the community was responsible for maintaining the infrastructure. When asked who should be responsible, the respondents stated that they assumed that whoever had provided the infrastructure, i.e., local government or an NGO, should be responsible. As a result, the infrastructure deteriorates rapidly and ultimately becomes too risky to use.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-23:** Organize an IGA group or individuals for maintenance of low cost latrines and tube-wells.

**Observations.** Discussions during the MTE showed that the PNGOs I&E officers were predominantly involved with installation of WASH structures, but they did not have much time for advocacy with higher officials in order to install more latrines and tube-wells.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-24:** TOs and TMs should facilitate effective networking with GoB and NGO partners and civil society for installation of appropriate WASH infrastructure.

### **PURPOSE 3 -DISASTER AND CLIMATE RISK MANAGEMENT**

**Observations.** The MTE heard that during floods, VDCs act to coordinate settlement of village members in shelters and ensure that elderly, pregnant women, and other vulnerable people are given priority. Early warning messages are broadcast to the village by the VDC. When asked about the most important activities, all VDCs mentioned their interactions with UP and Upazila officials. Several VDCs, however, did not mention their Disaster and Climate Risk Management roles, and VDC members were not able to clearly articulate the purpose of their committees. It was also understood by the MTE that VDCs do not interact in a systematic way with community members, or more specifically with PEP households.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-25:** Need to work with VDCs to clarify what is their purpose and that members are committed to this purpose, including advocating for needs of PEP and serving as the community focal point for messaging and as the organizing group during disasters, but this should not be main purpose of VDC. Clarity of purpose is essential if the VDCs are to remain functional after the end of the project; and in order to be successful to address this purpose, VDCs need to interact in a more regular and structured way with the PEP HH in their communities.

**Observations.** Program support to the formal Early Warning system implemented by the UzDMC, UDMC, and UDV and community groups, including VDCs, youth groups, and SBTBs is effective within the program area. In both the haor and char areas, the available lead time for early warning from flash floods is very short, compared, for example with cyclone early warning on the coast.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-26:** The very short lead-time for early warning in the char and haor areas places great emphasis on longer-term preparedness strategies:

- Shifting to forms of savings that are not exposed to risks (e.g. other than livestock, physical cash) or reducing the risks of holding these types of assets;
- Supporting livelihood activities that are less exposed to risks from these shocks (non-ag IGAs, employment).

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**Observations.** Entrepreneurs in the Union Digital Centers are aware of the weather website, but the one UDC visited by the MTE had limited awareness on how to navigate the site to find more geographically detailed information.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-27:** Strengthen training of entrepreneurs in Union Digital Centers to better understand how to navigate available websites and identify other websites.

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**Observations.** The MTE observed women-friendly infrastructure constructed with program support to be pipe culverts, U-drains, school-cum-flood shelters, and brick mound protection walls. The program has very limited resources to build such structures, and target numbers are very low in relation to total demand. The infrastructure project selection process includes being demand-driven in that the project has been identified in a Community Action Plan developed by a VDC, a physical feasibility study has been completed, and an estimate made of the number of people who will benefit from the structure. The investments appear to be very costly in comparison to the number of individuals that are benefitting. The investments are risky. The MTE found in villages that had received support from SHOUHARDO I that some of the plinth-raising, for example, had been totally washed away by subsequent floods. On the other hand, in the deep haor, the MTE observed some very effective brick wall construction still in place from a previous EU-funded CARE project that was highly appreciated by beneficiaries. When asked whether it was better for the program to invest funds in wave-protection or in cash transfer input support, for example, the response was “what good is input support, if we don’t have a house”, indicating the importance of infrastructure construction where it will have long-term sustained impact.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-28:** The program should analyze the experience of previous SHOUHARDO phases to determine factors that affect the sustainability of infrastructure construction and focus strategically on construction in the most vulnerable communities.

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**Observations.** The only climate-smart technology that is being promoted by the SHOUHARDO III Program is improved cook stoves, but the MTE observed no uptake of these stoves.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-29:** Drop the promotion of climate-smart technologies as a separate activity and apply a climate-smart lens to the promotion of new ideas and technologies across all purposes.

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**Observations.** During the MTE, a number of TOs for DCRM reported that it is difficult for busy Upazila officials to devote time to training sessions and it is difficult and time-consuming to engage with Upazila officials. It depends on establishing personal connections with individual members. UzDMCs are more focused on early warning and emergency response. They are less interested in engaging in supporting adaptation to climate change. It is easier, however, to engage with UDMCs.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-30:** On union and Upazila capacity building, concentrate support more to the UDMC in relation to the UzDMC. With the latter, engagement should be first in establishing dialogue, providing coordination assistance, then provide training if and when requested by the committee. The program should also engage with teachers and religious leaders, who are respected members of communities, to provide messages to their communities.

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**Observations.** The SBTB groups demonstrated a very high level of interest and enthusiasm to work in the program and to help spread its messages. The adolescents in the SBTB groups are particularly open to new ideas, and to messages about behavior and attitude changes that will affect their later lives. They are strong voices for changing attitudes of their peers, parents, neighbors and their effectiveness has been demonstrated through the elimination of harassment of adolescent girls in school. In the future

they will become thought leaders and influence attitudes in their communities. SHOUHARDO III should take advantage of the motivation of SBTB groups and expand the information and messages they can provide along with the activities they can carry out for their communities.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-31:** The SBTB groups should be expanded.

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**PURPOSE 4 – WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY**

**Observations.** The MTE observed a wide variation in the depth of understanding held by CEVs and consequently by the EKATA group members that they train. While almost all EKATA groups are active in critical areas such as GBV and early marriage, some groups and members do not have a good grasp of the underlying concepts of women’s empowerment that are critical to sustainability. With two years remaining in the program, SHOUHARDO III now has the experience to identify what information and modules have the greatest impact on gender equality. For the weaker EKATA groups, the program should identify and focus on the training that is bringing about the greatest change in women’s lives and which the groups can sustain and ensure that the groups have strong capacity in these areas. The program should seek to reduce the inevitable frictions that will arise within households as women change their traditional roles. This can be done by acknowledging potential frictions and by ensuring that activities present complementary ways in which to work through these challenges. Finally, the quality of gender programming depends on the capacity of partner organizations to understand and response to gender inequality, and the predominantly male staff of partner organizations may contribute to a limited understanding of the issues affect.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-32:** Focus on quality and what is working best:

- Identify the critical modules/actions that have the most impact.
- For weaker EKATA groups, focus on a few critical concepts/actions that they can sustain.
- Layer Couples Dialogues with skills training for women to help households make a smooth transition to more equitable roles for women and men.
- Conduct an in-depth analysis of whether the manner in which the youth skills training activity is implemented facilitates women’s empowerment or reinforces traditional gender norms and exclusion.
- Conduct a refresher training among partner staff based on examining personal attitudes and potential biases around gender and women’s empowerment.

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**Observations.** Field Facilitators are responsible for covering six to eight villages, supervising and providing guidance to as many as twenty volunteers and a number of community groups. A Field Facilitator covers many activities during one village visit. Some activities, such as input distribution, take more time, and during a village visit a Field Facilitator may spend only about 30 minutes on some activities (such as observing EKATA sessions). The result is that some volunteers, and some activities, get less attention which can have a negative impact on their training and thus on the quality of the program. The Field Supervisors who oversee the Field Facilitators perform mainly administrative tasks and are not using their technical skills in the field to ensure program quality. Field Supervisors should shift their focus to providing greater support in the field to technical managers, Field Facilitators and volunteers.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-33:** Greater focus on support to technical managers, FFs and volunteers to ensure quality of training.

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**Observations.** The high workload of SHOUHARDO III staff has been noted repeatedly by the MTE team. One workload issue identified by TOs is the high frequency and number of coordination meetings mandated by the program. While the integration of Purposes is a strength of the program, monthly coordination meetings take up a major part of the TOs’ time. For example, in Kurigram, one TO is

responsible for 188 villages in four upazilas and 18 unions over a large geographic area. Over the course of six months the TO has to call day-long meetings in 18 unions with the NNPC and UDCC; hold one meeting with religious leaders, facilitate a Couples Dialogue workshop; organize two QLSPs, hold a Referral Linkage workshop with like-minded organizations, and a district-level meeting on legal and medical services with like-minded organizations. This totals 105 meetings over six months. There are 132 working days in six months (not counting holidays and personal leave days). This leaves the TO with a total of 27 days, or 4.5 days per month, to perform all other duties and visit some of the 188 villages. The high number of meetings prevents TOs from getting to the field to provide the close monitoring and technical support that is needed to ensure program quality. In addition, government staff often attend only part of a meeting, reducing its effectiveness. Meetings can be made more efficient, which would improve their effectiveness.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-34:** Free up the STCs and Technical Officers to spend more time in the field by reducing administrative and coordination tasks:

- Reduce the number and length of meetings that TOs must organize, particularly at the union level.
- Schedule coordination meetings to last a half-day or less, especially for meetings with government staff.

**Observations.** The program is making a good effort to engage men around women's empowerment issues but is finding it challenging to get men to attend meetings. Men are busy and away from home much of the day with work and other responsibilities so CEVs find it difficult to meet with men during the day; CEVs schedule afternoon meetings but if the CEV lives in another village she cannot stay late. In addition, a man may attend a program meeting but will not stay if he does not see an immediate benefit; this is an obvious challenge when discussing women's empowerment as it raises new concepts that take some time to understand. The program is trying new places to reach men, such as tea shops and is recruiting male Gender Champions in a further effort to reach more men. It should use the male volunteers to reach men rather than the female CEVs. Men may be more receptive to hearing messages about gender equality and GBV from men rather than from women and male volunteers could reach men in places where the female CEVs would not be comfortable.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-35:** Train male volunteers (e.g., Male Champions, CAV) to lead WE sessions with men:

- Male Group sessions;
- Some sessions on Household Decision-making and GBV;
- Schedule sessions in evening when men can attend; and
- Suggestions on other gathering places, opportunities to engage men.

**Observations.** In conjunction with greater use of male volunteers to reach men with messages about women's empowerment, GBV, and gender equality, the program should prioritize key messages for men, which would help focus sessions and hold men's attention. Discussions with the men and youth groups during the MTE showed that they had received some information about exclusive breastfeeding and hand washing but many other aspects were missing. Training materials need to include specific sessions for encouraging male members of the community - husbands/fathers, grandfathers, unmarried males (younger youth). Messages should be tailored using short, focused messages to capture attention and interest.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-36:** Prioritize key messages for men:

- Women's mobility to attend clinics;
- Paying attention to children/child care as part of workload sharing;
- Economic costs of GBV;
- Economic benefits of women earning income; and

- Use short, focused messages to capture attention and interest.

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**Observations.** NNPCs are made up of government officers, ward representatives, and some SHOUHARDO III participants. Many of the government officials are from different departments and so do not devote sufficient time to the NNPC. Their main function is to support women's empowerment through the reduction of GBV, early marriage, and other harmful practices. NNPC members may be active as individuals but the committee itself is not clear on the role and how it should carry out its functions as a committee. Program staff noted that NNPCs are gradually becoming more active, but much needs to be done to make the committees a useful actor in reducing discrimination against women.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-37:** Strengthen understanding of roles and responsibilities of the NNPC at union level, so members have a clear function and purpose, and understand what actions can be taken as a committee to strengthen gender equality and add value to government and program efforts.

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### **PURPOSE 5 – PUBLIC SERVICES**

**Observations.** VDCs showed interest in community development and demonstrated leadership capacity while addressing the development needs of PEP households. The committee members are serving as liaisons between PEPs and UPs and NBDs. So, the committees need recognition by the LEBs and NBDs. This will lead to their institutionalization and developing them as governance and planning change agents to work with LEBs and NBDs after SHOUHARDO III is over.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-38:** The program should advocate for recognition of VDC toward its institutionalization and developing them as governance and planning change agents to work with LEBs and NBDs after SHOUHARDO III is over.

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**Observations.** The MTE noted that most VDCs are performing well as a voice for PEPs leaving needs for improvement of capacity of the remaining VDCs as priority action.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-39:** Conduct periodic assessment of VDC capacity and invest time to the low performing VDCs to improve their capacity for effective governance.

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**Observations.** Youth groups are found to be reporting the same thing that VDCs are doing (Ending Violence Against Women, fighting early marriage, contacting UP Chairman and members, and visiting Upazilas) which indicates a gap in proper coordination with VDCs.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-40:** Need for a clarification of roles and responsibilities of Youth Groups and VDCs to avoid overlapping of efforts and/or duplication of reporting. The Youth Groups should be under direction of VDCs.

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**Observations.** The need for refresher training of Youth Groups on their roles and responsibilities and maintaining linkages with the VDC and LEBs/NBDs is found essential for these groups to be fully functional. The program has provided Youth Group members with training on good governance.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-41:** Compared to the need for Youth Groups are fully functional, refreshers training shall be offered to the Youth Group members at least once a year on the functions of Youth Groups.

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**Observations.** In some communities, implementation of local/folk drama activities were affected due to religious barriers and lack of availability of local performers.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-42:** Increased number of cultural events at courtyards and sports competition can be organized as an alternative to the local/folk dramas in the communities showing reservation.

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**Observations.** Even though Youth Group members provide community services voluntarily, there is no direct financial incentive for them with the exception of those covered by COGs. These youth have developed a self-esteem and recognition in the community which they value significantly. The provision of technical skills development training under Purpose I<sup>39</sup> would be an opportunity toward incentive for youth from PEP households in remote areas. The selection criteria for youth participants is found to be well-defined and appear not to be too restrictive.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-43:** The program should advocate for recognition of Youth Groups by the government for their voluntary work in the community, especially on behalf of PEP households, and should inspire them to stay in volunteerism. Youth should be linked more closely with the youth skills and employment activity under Purpose I.

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**Observations.** The Union Disaster Coordination Committee is a platform to provide one-stop-service to the communities of the union. The UDCC meeting is a participatory process of identification and solution of community problems in the presence of relevant stakeholders. VDCs are responsible for close follow-up on implementation of UP's budgeted activities for the wards discussed in the ward *shavas* and open budget sessions facilitated by the program for the UPs, VDCs and communities. The agenda of the *shavas* also include the discussions on community concerns and gather demands for services from the UP and NBDs for PEP. All these meetings and sessions will be productive subject to the functionality of the UDCCs. But such an important committee is not fully functional in most of the unions visited by the MTE team. UDCCs only operate with SHOUHARDO III support. There appears to be a problem of attendance to meetings in deep haor.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-44:** In order to ensure a fully functional UDCC to provide one-stop-service to the communities SHOUHARDO III staff (PM/TO/FS as appropriate) should:

- (a) Follow up with the concerned upazila officials (UNO and respective upazila level NBD officials) and Union Parishad Chairman to familiarize the functions and importance of the UDCC;
- (b) Focus on UDCC meetings instead of investing efforts in the five program-selected standing and special committees which involve representation of VDC members since they are already embedded in UDCC; and
- (c) Facilitate placing community demands/issues in the UDCC meetings by the VDC representatives.

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**Observations.** In order to provide communities with access to one-stop-service, the government has assigned staff to be located at the UP complex. With the exception of SAAOs, VFAs and FWAs, the MTE team gathered reports of continued absence and extended vacancies in most of the UP offices visited and respondents interviewed. Delivery of public services to the communities is thus found to be constrained by required number of front-line staff at the union level of NBDs. The office space allocated to the frontline staff of the NBDs at the UP Complex in most of the places visited are found to be underutilized. Furthermore, the upazila level staff of NBDs lack required funding for logistics and adequate time to visit the hard to reach communities.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-45:** SHOUHARDO III should:

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<sup>39</sup> As part of skills development for employment, youth of PEP families are entitled to receive technical skills development training under Purpose One. The types of training provided include welding, auto mechanics, electrician, cell phone repair, computer operation, and tailoring. The selection criteria include that youth must be from the database of PEP households; with education at least grade 5; female youth, particularly divorced, widowed, and separated by the husband should be given priority; and a maximum of one youth per family.

- (a) Conduct advocacy with government (PACCs – Upazila, District and National levels as appropriate) for deployment of required number of frontline staffs against the posts already sanctioned but vacant, especially in the hard to reach areas on priority basis.
- (b) Follow up with the Upazila Administration on the issue of underutilization of office spaces allocated at the UP complex.
- (c) Conduct advocacy at the national level PACC for GoB provision of required funding for logistics for the upazila level staff in NBDs

**Observations.** Training on good governance with one-third of the 115 program unions and one-sixth of the 23 program upazilas were conducted by December 2017 and identified their roles and responsibilities and introduced them to the PACCs within their respective upazilas. The MTE team finds a significant difference in program progress between the unions and upazilas covered by the inception sessions and those unions and upazilas that are yet to receive any orientation by the program. As a result of participation in the inception sessions by unions and upazilas, LEBs and NBDs are reportedly making more frequent visits to communities, and the communities are getting access to these LEBs and NBDs. This signifies the importance of expediting inception and orientation sessions in the remaining unions and upazilas for the VDCs, Youth Groups, UPs and NBDs at Upazilas for their understanding of demand and delivery of public services.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-46:** Expedite the completion of training on good governance in the remaining unions and upazilas for VDCs, Youth Groups, UPs and upazila levels NBDs for their understanding of public services to the PEPs.

**Observations.** Communities' access to information helps build their knowledge, awareness and confidence which eventually ensures a common understanding of demand and delivery of public services. The work of VDCs and Youth Groups and their interaction with the UPs and NBDs becomes transparent to communities which enables the members of these committees and groups to earn community confidence. Public displays of these committees and groups and their functions is found to be an effective means of sharing information and increasing transparency and accountability.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-47:** Need to share names, contact information, and key responsibilities of VDCs and Youth Groups with the offices of UPs and frontline NBDs for wider publicity of the function of these committees and groups.

### **TARGETING, IMPACT & TOC**

**Observations.** In focus group discussions held with various Purpose 1 groups, a notable difference appeared between groups in the Char Region and groups in the Haor Region. This was the percentage of respondents who were from female-headed households. Of the 157 respondents in the seventeen focus groups held in the Char Region, only 12 respondents, or 7.6%, were from female-headed households. While in the Haor Region, 23 of 73 respondents, or 31.5%, in nine focus groups were from female-headed households. Perhaps the difference can be explained by who was available at the time for focus group discussions. The difference between the regions is not only highly unusual, however, but the percentage of respondents from female-headed households in the Char Region does not correspond well with the estimate from the Programs PEP household census that between 20% to 25% of participating households are female-headed.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-48:** Monitor participation of FHH in Char Region and promote their participation in project groups.

### **IMPLEMENTATION SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT**

**Observations.** The role of Regional Coordinators has changed substantially in SHOUHARDO III compared to earlier phases of SHOUHARDO. In SHOUHARDO I, for example, the program had sixty-four implementing partners and the function of the Regional Coordinators was to coordinate implementation with these partners and address implementation problems. A similar function was served in SHOUHARDO II, all be it, with a smaller number of partners at sixteen. SHOUHARDO III only has six partners, however, and these six have been working with CARE for all three phases. The need for regional level coordination and problem-solving is much less since there are fewer partners and these partners are highly experienced with SHOUHARDO approaches. The current regional coordinators who have been involved with earlier phases feel as if their contributions to the program have been minimized with the reduced role that they have.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-49:** Give responsibility for coordinating the development of tailored program strategies for each region to the Regional Coordinators.

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**Observations.** As with any large program, there is some tension in SHOUHARDO III between line management structures (COP-RC-PM-FS-FF-Volunteers) and technical support structures (DCOP-STC-TM-TO-Volunteers). Practically, however, only one position can supervise delivery of the program, and this is best done as close to the field as possible. Programs also need to avoid having implementation staff be responsible to more than one supervisor, which leads to confusion.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-50:** There is no best solution for resolving the tension between line management and technical support, other than to recognize it, and agree that:

- \* Everyone is on the same team trying to produce a high-quality program;
  - \* It is important to treat each other with respect; and
  - \* Communications should be transparent and timely.
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**Observations.** There is a perception that the function of CARE's Hub Office staff is to "police" the program. Staff from this office go to the field looking for problems, not only in commodity management, but also in other program implementation, and then they report directly to Dhaka when problems have been observed. This information is supposed to be sent back to regional staff so that they can respond, but there appear to be significant delays. Any gap in time between a field report from a Field Monitor and an opportunity for a Regional Coordinator to be aware of a problem and have a chance to address it is going to raise tension with Regional Coordinators. They should know about problems as soon as they have been discovered and be given a timely opportunity to address the problem.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-51:** A mechanism should be found for information generated by the field monitor teams to be shared in a more timely way with regional staff.

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### **PARTNERSHIP**

**Observations.** The current six implementing partners in SHOUHARDO III have been working with CARE in the SHOUHARDO Program through all three phases. The relationships between CARE and these partners are strong, but there is little excitement in the relationships. Each is starting to take the other a little bit for granted because they have been working with each other for so long.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-52:** Somehow the partners need to bring excitement back into the relationship:

- Implementing partners at the central level showing more interest in the program...maybe find a way to engage staff from partner HQs in field monitoring.
  - CARE showing more interest in implementing partners...finding out more about broader partner programs and whether there are interventions appropriate for addressing SHOUHARDO III needs.
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### **COLLABORATIVE, LEARNING AND ACTION**

**Observations.** Field staff complain about the short time (one week) between the close of reporting period and the required date of submission of reports.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-53:** On M&E, increase the interval between the close of the reporting period and reporting date. Field staff report that an interval of two weeks should be sufficient.

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**Observations.** As the program gains experience with implementation, it will be appropriate to begin to devote more resources to collect information from the field to document lessons learned about what has worked well and what have been challenges in implementation of SHOUHARDO III. This will require additional field staff resources. The existing M&E staff are already fully occupied with their regular and ongoing reporting duties, which will continue through to the end of the program. It will be very difficult for them to take on additional data collection and synthesizing activities.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-54:** The program will need to consider ways to provide additional field staff to meet the increasing needs related to collecting information for project learning. Depending on the timing and duration of these projected additional staffing needs, the program should either hire additional field staff with the appropriate qualifications (if the need for additional field work associated with learning activities is deemed to be regular and ongoing) or make necessary provisions and budgetary allocations to hire third parties to undertake field work associated with specific learning activities.

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### **HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**Observations.** The CEVs are responsible for covering two villages, unlike other volunteers who work in only one village. This often involves a lot of travel, yet CEVs must pay the cost of their travel for work from their own pockets and are not reimbursed. Travel costs may consume a substantial portion of a CEV's remuneration, reducing an already low level of pay. All other program staff are reimbursed for their travel expenses, and CEVs should be treated the same way.

**RECOMMENDATION #B-55:** Reimburse full cost of transport for mandatory meetings for CEVs, if Priority Recommendation #I4 to assign one CEV to one village is not accepted.

**SHOUHARDO III Mid-Term Evaluation  
Finance & Commodity Management Tables**

The following tables provide additional quantitative information on finance and commodity management in the SHOUHARDO III Program

**FINANCE**

**Table C-1. Cash Expenditure Summary through December 2017 (US\$)**

Cost Center	Monetization Proceeds	202e	ITSH	GoB Contribution	Total
CARE	1,498,787	5,889,708	1,624,752	2,576,920	11,590,167
PNGOs	9,135,028	1,425,231	---	886,572	11,446,831
Total Direct Costs	10,633,815	7,314,939	1,624,752	3,463,492	23,036,998
NICRA for CARE	1,350,495	928,997	---	---	2,279,492
Total Expenses	11,984,310	8,243,936	1,624,752	3,463,492	25,316,490
Total LoA Budget at Time of Approval	38,394,852	20,000,000	5,342,960	8,000,000	71,737,812
Current Projected Budget	37,387,371	21,624,942	5,104,800	7,707,490	71,824,603
Burn Rate	32.1%	38.1%	31.8%	44.9%	35.2%

**COMMODITIES**

**Table C-2. LoA Commodity Summary (MT)**

Fiscal Year	Direct Distribution	Monetization	Total
FY 15	-	32,480	32,480
FY 16	-	25,000	25,000
FY 17	3,211	19,730	22,941
FY 18 (Through December 2017)	900	-	900
Cumulative disbursements through December 2017	4,111	77,210	81,321
Original Proposed LOA Quantities	13,190	110,910	124,100
Revised Programed LOA Quantities	11,540	126,810	138,350
Percentage of LOA Programmed Achieved Through December 2017	36	61	59

Note: FY18 direct distribution of commodities includes 105 MT for emergency response.

**Table C-3. Commodity Loss Summary (MT)**

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Amount Called Forward</b>	<b>Ocean Losses</b>	<b>Amount Received in Country</b>	<b>Inland Losses</b>	<b>Percent Lost</b>
<i>Monetized Commodities</i>					
FY 15	32,480	-	32,480	-	-
FY 16	25,000	-	25,000	-	-
FY 17	19,730	-	19,730	-	-
FY 18 Thru QTR 2	43,500	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>120,710</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>77,210</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<i>Distributed Commodities</i>					
FY 15	-	-	-	-	-
FY 16	4,320	25.18	4.287	0.740	0.60%
FY 17	3,300	58.38	3.242	2.894	1.86%
FY 18 Thru QTR 2	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,620</b>	<b>83.56</b>	<b>7,529</b>	<b>3.634</b>	<b>1.14%</b>

**Table C-4. Monetization Cost Recovery**

<b>SALE No.</b>	<b>FISCAL YEAR</b>	<b>COMMODITY</b>	<b>QUANTITY (MT)</b>	<b>C&amp;F (\$/MT)</b>	<b>SALE PRICE (\$/MT)</b>	<b>COST RECOVERY</b>
	FY15	Soft White Wheat, Bulk	20,040	241.36		
			12,440	375.88		
	FY15 Total		32,480	292.88	242.813	82.905%
	FY16	Soft White Wheat, Bulk	12,500	345.43		
			12,500	339.29		
	FY16 Total		25,000	342.36	282.170	82.418%
	FY17	Soft White Wheat, Bulk	13,420	398.58		
			6,310	298.67		
	FY17 Total		19,730	366.63	303.840**	82.880%
	FY18 Thru QTR 2	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL FY 2015 thru FY 2018 QTR 2</b>			<b>77,210</b>	<b>327.75*</b>	<b>271.15*</b>	<b>82.730%</b>

\*Weighted averages by volume \*\*FY17 sales price is tentative

**Table C-5. Staff involved in Commodity Management**

Title of Position	CARE	PNGOs	Total
Senior Technical Coordinator - Commodity	1	-	1
Logistics Officer	1	-	1
Commodity Tracking Manager	1	-	1
Commodity Reporting Officer	8	-	8
Regional Commodity Accountant	2	-	2
Regional Commodity Logistics Manager	2	-	2
Commodity Officer	-	6	6
Field Monitor	23	-	23
Food Distributor	-	35	35
Warehouse Officer	8	-	8
Assistant Warehouse Officer	8	-	8
<b>Sub-Total: Direct Staff</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>95</b>
Tally Clerk	8	-	8
Cleaner	9	-	9
Security Guards	24	-	24
<b>Sub-Total: Casual Worker</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Total: Direct Staff &amp; Casual Worker</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>136</b>

Notes: Most CARE and all PNGOs are engaged in direct commodity distribution  
 Field Monitors are food distribution and end-use check. They are also responsible for program implementation and monitoring and directly report to the M&E Unit.



